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TO
PENROSE

SAINTS IN SUSSEX

The Novels of

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

THE GEORGE AND THE CROWN
THE END OF THE HOUSE OF ALARD
THE TRAMPING METHODIST
GREEN APPLE HARVEST
THE CHALLENGE TO SIRIUS
STARBRACE
TAMARISK TOWN
JOANNA GODDEN
SPELL LAND
ISLE OF THORNS
THREE AGAINST THE WORLD

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS—NEW YORK

SAINTS IN SUSSEX

POEMS AND PLAYS

BY

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
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POEMS

THE CALENDAR

I
St. Andrew.

II
St. Philip and St. James.

III
St. Peter and St. Paul.

IV
St. Mary Magdalene.

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ST. ANDREW

THE MEN OF SUSSEX CRYING AFTER HIM

ANDREW, what of the North?
  In November shadows drear
We have heard thee marching forth
  With songs of a glad new year.
Thou goest to mountains high,
  To Picts in a Northern fen—
But, Andrew, tarry and hear the cry
  Of the little Southern Men.

Down by the seas of Gaul,
  Where the Roman eagles stand,
Anderida they call
  Our shaggy forest land.
We have no saving health,
  To us no Word comes forth,
On us the gods bestow no wealth—
  Yet Andrew goes to the North.

Oh, stay and give us grace,
  For our hearts are grey with dule,
As each man lifts his face
  In the dreadful days of Yule,
When the burning Wheel stands still
  In the black and dropping skies,
And the Long Man screams upon the hill
  With the human sacrifice.

Andrew, what of the North?
  Our Druids tell sad tales,
Our arms have lost their worth
  In the scrubby hills of Wales;
But thy mighty banners go
  Forward and pass us by,
As the Northern streamers fly and flow
  On the red wings of the sky.

We hear strange tales of thee—
  We hear thou preachest still
A Man more fair than Bald, a Tree
  More tall than Ygdrasyl,
A Bread more strong than meat,
  Water more fierce than wine—
Than the mead which drunken gods find sweet
  In the halls where Heroes dine. . . .

To the little Southern Men
  Saint Andrew answered he:
"I have heard from the Northern fen
  Your moan from the Gaulish sea;
And though I pass you by,
  And may not see your face,
Yet my Lord hath heard your cry,
  And he sends you hope of grace.

"Three saints shall teach the land
  That lies by the Southern sea;
Three saints on your shores shall stand—
  A thrice-noble company.

The Word that heals and saves,
  Which to the Scots I send,
Wilfred shall teach by the waves
  That beat on Manhood's End.

" On Havant's drawling tide,
  Which round the island swells,
The solemn ships shall glide
  To the chime of Richard's bells;
On Mayfield's hills the iron
  Of Dunstan's anvil rings
As he hammers gates for Zion
  And fights Unholy Things.

" So faint not—all is well,
  And the price of hope is paid
By the Lord who hath harrowed hell,
  And hath made the gods afraid.
Eternity keeps the hours
  Till the Sussex Saints go forth—
Wilfred and Richard and Dunstan are yours,
  But Andrew goes to the North."

ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES TO ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE

Said the May Day Saints to the Grey Day Saints,
Singing across the year:
How is it with you in October?
With us the meadows are green,
And the grass is warm with the sun,
And strown with the golden pence
Of the coltsfoot, our offertory.
The tapers are lit for our feast—
Tall tapers are lit for our feast
In the drooping horse-chestnut boughs;
And the thrushes serve our Mass
There in the white thorn hedge,
Where the bloom is breaking against
A smudgy, sweet grey sky
That shall give us holy water. . . .
Oh, tell us, October Saints,
How you fare at the end of the year.
Are you cold in the draught of the year?—
On the edge of the fog of All Saints
And the gloom of the Holy Souls?

Said the Grey Day Saints to the May Day Saints,
Singing across the year:
How is it with you in the Spring?
The leaves in the wood are red,

And the frightened trees are a-shake
Down by the moaning brook.
The birds sweep the sky with desperate wings of escape.
There is none to serve our Mass,
And the high wind is our Priest.
No censer swings for us
From the lime-tree's blossomed boughs;
Yet have we joy of our feast,
For we know that the Child is near—
The Child who is born in December,
In the frozen December night.
Round him the year shall wake,
And climb the Spring into May,
To the feast of Philip and James.
The tapers of Christ's own Mass
Shall rekindle the fading sun,
And Mary shall lift her Babe
To the horn of the wintry moon,
And ride him into a Happy New Year.

ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

THE GATE OF LEWES

St. Peter sits on Caburn Hill,
  St. Paul sits high on Beacon Down,
And there, each side of Wakeland's Mill,
  They guard the way to Lewes Town:
They hold the Sword and Keys in state—
  Our bands are loosed, our sins forgiven—
They sit there guarding Lewes Gate
  As they would guard the Gate to Heaven.

For Lewes Town like Heaven is,
And Heaven is like Lewes Town.

The golden streets go up the hill,
In sunshine dreaming, warm and still;
Ouse river through the vale below
Like Sion's Stream of Life doth flow,
And many fruits our fruit-trees bear—
Plum, cherry, apple, quince, and pear—
And in our streets the live-long day
The girls and boys are at their play.
When evening falls the church bells ring,
And faithful voices pray and sing;
When morning comes the faithful feet
Tread to the altar-paces sweet.

ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

The Lamb is with us day and night,
So, like high Heaven's, our streets are bright.
The Lamb is with us night and day,
So two Apostles guard the way
'Twixt Caburn Hill and Beacon Down,
The way that leads to Lewes Town.

For Lewes Town like Heaven is,
And Heaven is like Lewes Town.

Oh, great St. Peter, hear our cry
From your high sunset seat on Firle,
Promise by Him you did deny
That our dear city's gates of pearl
Shall not be forced by any foe;
Nor any soul that mongers sin,
Or in defilement loves to go,
Or makes a lie, shall enter in.

Oh, great St. Paul on Mount Caburn,
Promise by Him you sought to slay
That your fierce, fiery sword shall turn
Both east and west and every way
To guard the sunrise road that swings
Past Glynde and Wick and Stonery,
Because it is the road of kings,
Who bring their glory from the sea.

They bring their glory to our feast,
As to the New Jerusalem;
They are the Wise Kings of the East,
Who journeyed once to Bethlehem;

And through our streets they'll ride in state,
From Brooks to Priory, up and down,
And praise the Saints who guard our Gate—
The holy Gate of Lewes Town.

ST. MARY MAGDALENE

Mary Magdalene has looked out of her window,
High in her cottage at Horeham Road ;
From her high window has Mary looked down,
And seen all the doings and sights of the town :
The boys look up as they pass her abode—
The boys look up, but the girls look down.

Mary Magdalene has caught sight of the Preacher—
The Preacher who's come from the town in the west ;
She hears him preaching out there on the Green :
His words have troubled her heart—she has seen
His face, and the sobs are all thick in her breast,
And her tears are the saltest that ever were seen.

From Horeham Road to Boreham Street
And High Horse Bridge where the waters meet—
East or west, was there ever seen
Such a preaching, such a teaching for Mary Magdalene ?

A boy calls up to her there at the window :
" Come down, my sweet, for the night is here,
And the stars are dim in the mists above,
And the darkening field is the place for love—
Come down, my lovely, come down, my dear,
And show me beauty and give me love."

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But Mary Magdalene stands on at the window,
And the dusk is white on her tear-stained face,
For the Preacher has broken her heart, and it turns
To the Word that freezes, the Word that burns,
The Word that is Flesh in the market-place,
Where the Preacher's voice through the silence burns.

From Horeham Road to Boreham Street
And High Horse Bridge where the waters meet—
East or west, was there ever seen
Such a turning, such a burning for Mary Magdalene?

Mary Magdalene has gone down to the Preacher—
The strange young man from the western town:
With silk she is shining, with scent she is sweet,
Her eyes are like water, like flowers are her feet,
And when she has come to the Green she falls down
Before the young Preacher and kisses his feet.

She kisses his feet and she cries out for pardon,
With tears and with kisses his feet are all wet;
The boys are all staring and no word is said,
For she wipes his wet feet with the hair of her head—
Her lovely brown hair that no boy can forget,
It is like a brown beech-wood, the hair of her head.

From Horeham Road to Boreham Street
And High Horse Bridge where the waters meet—
East or west, was there ever seen
Such a sighing, such a crying for Mary Magdalene?

And the Preacher has stooped, and has blessed her and
raised her,
And the boys are all laughing to see them stand so:
"Ah, lovely, and have you forgotten so soon
The ways of a woman, the ways of the moon,
And all the gay gallants with whom you would go
And show them the madness that's under the moon?"

The Preacher has brought Magdalene to his mother,
And his mother has given her a white gown to wear,
And they've sat down to supper together all three,
And the boys stand outside in the street and agree
That the joke's gone too far—"Come out, Mary, my dear,
For you and these strangers will never agree."

But Mary Magdalene has looked out of the window—
She stands in the window all white and alone—
"I will never return while the stars shine above
To the ways that are far from the true ways of love.
Oh, many a lover poor Mary has known,
But never till now has she learned to know love."

From Horeham Road to Boreham Street
And High Horse Bridge where the waters meet—
East or west, was there ever seen
Such a story, such a glory for Mary Magdalene?

ST. MATTHEW

MATTHEW the Publican sits at the gate of September,
Counting the gold of the passing and vanishing year—
The gold that the Summer must pay with her tears and sighings—
The gold of the falling leaves.

The Lord goes by and, turning, says unto Matthew:
"Follow me—follow me down the long months into Winter,
Follow me—follow me down through the fogs of November,
When the coin of the year is spent and the trees are beggared,
With never a golden leaf to drop at the gate—
Follow me."

Matthew the Publican rises to follow his Lord;
But first he will make a feast at the gate of September—
He will make a feast for the sinners and saints of the year.
The way is long and the Autumn paths are dreary,
So before he treads the dark road into the winter
He makes a great golden feast, the last feast of Summer,
And he throws his golden treasury over the fields.
The dying, fluttering, shimmering leaves of September,
The last of the daisies and coltsfoot and dandelions,
Are Matthew the Publican's treasure, his gold and silver.

Which he throws at his Master's feet, the feet he must
follow
Down, down the Autumn, into the fogs—
To the end of the year.

ASCENSION DAY

So thou hast left us and our meadows,
Lord, who hast blessed us and our meadows—
Lord of the sorrel-hearted hay,
Lord of the pollened flowers of May.
From our fields thou hast ascended,
Passing into the anthered light
Beyond the sun, by the winds attended—
And the Sussex fields are white
With daisies, and the diadem
Of the hawthorn crowns the hedge,
And at the blue pond's reedy edge,
Like a broidered, silken hem
The yellow irises are blown.
Lord, thou art gone, and gone alone.

Dost thou think of us and our meadows,
Lord, who hast left us and our meadows?
In shining pastures of the sky
Thou walkest, Lord, ascended high.
The stars are flowers about thy feet,
And looking up to thee we see
The River flowing silently—
The Milky River, broad and sweet
As Rother River here below,
While planets the dim marshes strow,
And constellations flower and fade. . . .

ASCENSION DAY

O Lord, thou hast thy country there,
The fields and meadows of the sky,
The fields and meadows ever fair,
The dear, divine, undying glade.

At night we too walk in thy meadows,
We walk beside thee in thy meadows.
At midnight I may hear thy call,
And ride to thee on the moon's light—
To where the living waters fall,
And the unfading fields are bright.
The stars are flowers about our feet,
And at my side thou art the sweet
Perfumed, eternal breath of May. . . .

With a sob the pale-eyed day
Wakens at the Rother's mouth,
And back to earthly fields I go,
And back to earthly toil, and slow
Hot days of the slow, drawling South,
Toiling to keep the fields alive,
For our poor meadows cannot thrive
On just the memory of thy feet,
Which trod them once and found them sweet.
Our tears, our sweat, must give them life,
For thou, our Lord, hast gone on high
To golden countries of the sky,
To golden fields of golden stars,
Beyond the echo of our strife. . . .
Yet there, upon the shining hill,
Thou dreamest of our meadows still,
And, Lord, we have thy promise plain
That thou wilt walk in them again.

PENTECOST

Dear Heart of the Eternal Rose—
O Many-coloured Heart of Fire—
That in our Lord's green garden grows,
Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire.

Sweet Honey of the heavenly flowers,
Distilled from the white lily's heart,
Drip on these thirsty lips of ours—
Thou the anointing Spirit art.

O Wind, down heaven's long lanes ablow,
Warm, perfume-laden Breath of Love,
O Sweetness, on our hearts bestow
Thy blessed unction from above.

O Sun, in the mild skies ashine,
O Moon, bewitching all the night,
These dark and groping ways of mine
Enable with perpetual light.

Dear Absolution of the Sun,
Dear Quickener of the meadow's grace,
When the day's course of toil is run,
Anoint and cheer our soiléd face.

PENTECOST

When evening falls and darkness creeps,
  And the long starry hours have come,
And all the world is tired, and sleeps,
  Keep far our foes, give peace at home.

O Sun, O Wind, O Flower, O Fire! . . .
Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire!

CORPUS CHRISTI

Now thou hast come to the end of thy pilgrimage, Lord ;
Thy lamp glows red like a star at the dim lane's turning:
The bread and the wine of thy supper are set in the shadows,
And the gleam of thy cottage calls toilers and wanderers home.

In the feathery green of the hedges the chervil is blooming—
Petals and wafers of scent, like the Host in a dream. . . .
The night wind is singing the Mass of thy living and dying,
O Pilgrim of Love, who at last hast come to thy shrine.

Thou art at peace. At thy journey's end thou sittest,
Thy cheek on thy folded hands, before thee the bread and wine,
While far down the sky the yellow moon dips to her dying,
And the big stars hang like lamps in the fading west.

Lord of the journey's end, if I too should stumble
At last to the long lane's turning, there may I see
The beckon and gleam of the lamp that is hung in thy cottage,
Calling me home to my supper, my friends, and sleep.

CORPUS CHRISTI

The Saints sup with thee, there in the dusk and lamp-
light—
Mary and Joseph and Peter and all my friends—
With faces propped on their tired and toil-worn fingers,
And kind eyes full of the peace of the journey's end.

To that feast of the Saints in Light, dear Lord, please
bring me,
Wash my dusty feet as on Maundy long ago;
At the end of the day let me find my Lord at supper,
And forget my toils with him in the Breaking of Bread.

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THE CONCEPTION B.V.M.

Anna's Voice :

Down by the rushes I paused and bent—
I bent with a sudden lovely pang of joy,
And I knew that my hope was true. . . .
Lord God of our fathers, if thou send me a son
He shall be bred in thy fear,
But if thou send me a daughter
She shall be bred in thy love.
Lord, I pray thee, send me a girl.

LADY DAY IN HARVEST

A LULLABY FOR THE FALLING ASLEEP OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Mary sleeps—and as she sleeps the angels sing :

Sleep, sleep, sweetly sleep,
Sweetly sleep, sleep, sleep,
You who rocked the cradle—so—
In the stable long ago.
Golden Rose of David's stem,
Sleep, and dream of Bethlehem ;
Dream of herald angels singing,
Dream of Christmas bells a-ringing
In the steeples of the town,
Telling of the Christ come down
To a stable long ago ;
Dream in harvest of the snow ;
Dream his head is on your breast,
Then, smiling, sleep and take your rest—
Golden Rose of David's stem,
Sleep and dream of Bethlehem.

Mary sleeps—and as she sleeps her Son sings :

Sleep, sleep, sweetly sleep,
Sweetly sleep, sleep, sleep :
You rocked the cradle once for me,
Mother of sweet liberty ;
And now I sing your lullaby,
While angels watch us from the sky,

And the August stars are bright
In the dark, hop-scented night.
Rest, darling mother, rest
With your head upon my breast,
For all the hundred happy hours
That my head has lain on yours.
Mother whose hair is grey with love,
  With memories of Calvary's day. . . .
Darling, in the fields above
  The young angels wait to play,
And all the holy innocents,
  Who once laid down their lives for me,
Will climb into your lap and lie
  Where once I lay so lovingly.
Rest, darling mother, rest
With your head upon my breast.

Mary sleeps—and as she sleeps we all sing:

Sleep, sleep, mother, sleep,
Sweetly sleep, sleep, sleep;
On his bosom lay your head,
While the angels watch your bed,
And the August stars are red—
  Little mother of joy divine,
  Little mother of purity,
  Sweet mother of eternity—
(You our mother and he our brother);
So shall heaven's windows shine
With lights of home, burning softly down,
  On your children on their way
  To your door—until the day
When we reach our native town:

And our hands shall knock, and yours unlatch,
And we shall come home to you under the thatch—
To you our mother, to him our brother,
So shall we love you and him and each other.
  Little mother of joy divine,
From your window in heaven look down,
And light the way to our native town.

PLAYS

I
The Child Born at the Plough.

II
The Shepherd of Lattenden.

THE CHILD BORN AT THE PLOUGH

A NATIVITY PLAY IN FOUR SCENES

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CHARACTERS

THEIR LOOKER AT WICKHAM
THEIR LOOKER AT LEASAN } The Three Lookers.
THEIR LOOKER AT SLINCHES

DAVID—The Gipsy King.

ABRAHAM
MOSES
ELIJAH
ISAIAH } Gipsies.
MIRIAM
HANNAH
OLD EVA

THE LANDLADY OF THE PLOUGH.

SQUIRE HEROD.

MRS. HEROD.

SALOME.

A MATHEMATICIAN
A BIOLOGIST } Three Wise Men from Oxford and Cambridge.
AN ASTRONOMER

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD.

JOSEPH.

MARY.

MR. STEPHEN—a Deacon.

OLD JOHN—a blind man.

THE SCHOOLCHILDREN.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

THE ANGEL CHOIR.

Scene I

A Lambing-hut on the Marshes between Rye and Winchelsea.

Scene II

The Public Bar at the Plough.

Scene III

The Stable at the Plough.

Scene IV

The same again.

THE CHILD BORN AT THE PLOUGH

Scene I

Scene : *A Lambing-hut on the Marshes between Winchelsea and Rye. All is in darkness except where the brazier makes a red glow. The glow illuminates the faces and figures of the* Three Lookers, *who crouch over it, warming their hands.* Their Looker at Wickham *is a young man, with sandy hair and moustache. He wears corduroy trousers and his old army tunic.* Their Looker at Leasan *is middle-aged and darkly bearded. He wears breeches and gaiters, with a shapeless cloth coat, and almost suggests the gamekeeper rather than the shepherd.* Their Looker at Slinches *is an old man, wearing old-fashioned clothes—trousers and a long coat. He alone of the* Three Lookers *wears a hat—a round, semi-clerical affair, such as used to surmount the labourer's smock of a bygone age. His beard is a neat white frill round his wrinkled, pippin-like old face.*

Their Looker at Wickham. Oooo-ah !

Their Looker at Leasan. You may well say " Oooo-ah," Mr. Relph. It's a good thing to say, seeing how tired and weary and fatigued and exhausted we all are, put out to lambing on Christmas Eve.

Their Looker at Slinches. Never have I met such a tedious nonsensical notion, and I've bin looker man and

boy in all parts of the marsh. Twenty-seven year was I wud old Mus' Vidler over at Honeychild, and nigh on fifteen wud Mus' Godden at the Loose—but never a lamb before April—no such thing heard of on the marsh. It wants a furriner lik the new Squire to come along from the Shires and buy up the old pläace and teach us our business.

Leasan. Well, it ain't no business of yours, Mr. Stuppeny. I'm their looker at Leasan, and it's I wot have got to fall in with their silly new-fangled notions that'll lose us the whole flock by February. You and Relph have but come to keep me company, seeing as it's Christmas Eve, and I might be setting up at the Plough, enjoying my Christmas beer, instead of hanging about on the marsh waiting for lambs that'll never be born alive.

Wickham. They lamb at Christmas in Cambridgeshire.

Leasan. Cambridgeshire ain't Sussex, nor Kent neither. In Kent and Sussex we've lambed in April since Noah's flood.

Slinches. It's all them Shires. Setting themselves up for wisdom over all the country. Christmas lambing ain't the only bad thing that's come to us from the Shires. There's an outlandish heathen tune that Parson's brought to sing to-morrow instead of Spiffkins.

Leasan. What! You ain't telling me that they won't be having Spiffkins in F to-morrow?

Slinches [*groaning*]. Not a note! Parson's all for some stuff from the Shires he calls Plainsong—and middling plain it be too, not a kick in it—more lik a set o' cats among the barns than Christian music. Oh, it's all part of our good ways going wud the old Reverund. Ever since my voice cracked I've sung the part in Spiffkins where it says

' O Lord, the only begotten son,' and I thought as I'd sing it till it was time for me to go into the ground.

Wickham [*maliciously*]. Maybe that's why they've changed it, Mr. Stuppeny. I've heard tell as your voice has cracked again.

Slinches. My voice is a tedious fine voice, young feller, and you've no call to speak so to your elders. Year after year I've sung ' O Lord, the only begotten son,' and there ain't naun the matter wud the tune, nor wud my voice neither.

[SLINCHES *lifts up his cracked old voice and sings tunelessly from the Gloria in Excelsis*—' O Lord, the only begotten son, Jesus Christ. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.' *The reason for the change is now apparent.* WICKHAM *sniggers, and* SLINCHES *turns angrily upon him.*]

Slinches. You ain't naun but an ill-conditioned brat. All the school-larnin' you've had ain't taught you to respect your elders. I've a mind——

Leasan [*interrupting*]. Come, come, Mäaster, and you too, Mr. Relph. Don't let us start quarrelling this Christmas night, or I'll wish more'n ever we was all at the Plough. Reckon we ought to behave ourselves seemly, being like the shepherds who watched their flocks by night all seated on the ground, as the carol says.

Slinches. 'Twas a fine carol, and I guess those were fine times.

Wickham. What times?

Slinches. The times when Christ was born. Reckon nothing ever happens lik that nowadays. Christ was

born at an inn in an old pläace called Bethlehem a dunnamany years ago. Reckon it ud be middling fine if he cud be born at the Plough up at Udimore for all us folk to see.

Leasan [*a little shocked at the venturesomeness of age*]. Come, come, Maaster. That ain't the way to think of it. Christ was born in the Bible, and it ud never do fur him to be born out of it. All that belongs to the old times long ago.

Wickham. But they weren't long ago when they happened. I bet the shepherds felt pretty much as we feel to-night—tired of watching and maybe grumbling a bit. And the inn at Bethlehem was pretty much the same as the Plough at Udimore, with Mrs. Ades standing behind the bar, and all the gipsies drinking. . . .

Leasan [*shocked now at youth*]. For shame, Mr. Relph, to speak so. That ain't the way to talk of holy things.

Wickham. And what's the way to talk of 'em, I'd like to know?

Leasan. You should talk of them respectfully, as things that happened once upon a time. Reckon those shepherds was different from us, being Holy People in the Bible, and you've no call to talk of Bethlehem as if it was like Udimore. Besides, there was the Angel of the Lord. You don't get angels now.

[WICKHAM *is stumped, and scratches his head.*]

Slinches. I dreamed I saw an angel wunst. He wur dressed lik Parson, but had wings sticking out of his back.

Wickham [*recovering his argument*]. Anyways, I reckon the folk at Bethlehem felt pretty much the same as the folk

at Udimore, and I bet those shepherds weren't so different from us, in spite of all you say.

Leasan. Well, don't let's start arguing again. We all seem a bit short to-night. Maybe we're missing our time at the Plough. What do you say to us singing a carol to make us feel more Christmaslike?

Slinches. Aye, I'll sing wud you, Mäaster.

Wickham. Let's sing "While shepherds watched."

Slinches. That's a tedious fine carol, and seemly.

Leasan. Well, I've no objection. Reckon we all know the words.

Wickham. One, two, three—Go!

[*They sing together:*

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night
All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down
And glory shone around."

As they sing the last line the ANGEL OF THE LORD *is seen standing in the light of the brazier. They sit and gape at him, and for a moment or two there is a complete, terrified silence. Then the* ANGEL *sings the next verse of the carol, half reassuring, half bantering them:*

"Fear not, said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind.
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind."

In appearance the ANGEL OF THE LORD *is very much as* THEIR LOOKER AT SLINCHES *had dreamed him. He is "dressed like Parson" in a*

long white Sarum surplice, with a scarf, but instead of a hood a handsome pair of wings sprout from his shoulders. He is like Milton's "affable archangel," free of any pomposity or false solemnity. He now looks at the THREE LOOKERS *with a twinkle in his eye.*]

Angel. You're surprised to see me—eh? You thought I never came out of the Bible, did you?

Wickham [*finding voice*]. Oh, sir, we beg your pardon.

Leasan. We ain't used to this sort of thing, as you might say. We were kind of taken aback, like.

Slinches. I wurn't taken aback. Reckon as all this is happening as it should ought.

Angel. Of course it is, though I reckon too you *were* taken aback, Mr. Stuppeny. This is the first live angel you've seen outside a dream as well as outside the Bible.

Leasan. Why have you come, sir?

Angel. What a question! I've come as the Angel came to the Shepherds in the Bible, to bring you good tidings of great joy. [*Sings.*]

"To you in Udimore this day
Is born of David's line
A Saviour who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign:

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swaddling bands
And in a manger laid."

Wickham. Did you say Udimore, sir?

Angel. Yes, Udimore. You will find the Babe in the stable at the Plough.

Slinches. The gipsies is all up at the Plough to-night.

Angel. Of course they are. The gipsies sometimes are very wise.

Leasan. You don't tell me that dirty lot knew as Christ the Lord was coming?

Angel. They've known it and foretold it for a great many years. Come, you mustn't leave them to be the only folk there to greet him.

Leasan. Come to Udimore, sir?

Angel. Why, yes.

Leasan. But what about my work here? What about my master's lambs?

Angel. Your master's lambs shan't suffer. While you are at Udimore they shall be cared for by the holy angels themselves. I promise you a successful lambing, even though it *is* winter.

Wickham. Let's go to Udimore and see this thing which has happened there.

Slinches. Surelye, surelye. We've got to go and greet the babe, wheresumdever he's born.

Leasan [*getting up*]. Yes, we may as well go, though I never thought to see such doings outside the Scriptures. You promise me it will be all right about the lambs, sir?

Angel. Of course it will be all right. [*Singing is heard in the distance:* "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us."] Hark! Don't you hear the Angels coming over the marsh? Leave your lambs to them, and come and see the Lamb of God.

[*They all move out through the door into the moonlight. As they go the hidden Angel voices sing:*

Voices. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world :
Have mercy upon us.
O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world :
Grant us Thy peace.

Scene II

Scene : *The Public Bar at the Plough. The counter is on the left. On the right there is a door and an uncurtained window. Another door, behind the counter, opens into the passage leading to the back of the inn and the stable yard. The* Landlady *stands behind the counter, serving the company. She is a buxom, good-looking woman, dressed very much in the new style of the country-side—in high, laced boots and brilliant jumper. The gipsies are crowding round the bar, the men dressed in corduroys and velveteens, the women wrapped in big coloured shawls. Angry voices are heard, and some cries of " Shame ! "*

Landlady. Not so much noise, ladies and gentlemen, please. You can hear quite plain in the stable if there's a noise in the bar.

Hannah. How is the poor love doing, ma'am ?

Landlady. She's doing valiant. But I reckon no woman can have been through all she's been through and not feel something afterwards.

Miriam. She should never have left home with her time so near.

Landlady. Seemingly she couldn't help it. Joseph's folk used to live in these parts, and there's land here he had to come and see after—something to do with the taxing. I'm unaccountable sorry I couldn't have 'em in the house, but there ain't a corner to spare, with my sister and

my brother and his wife, and my sister's Albie and my brother's George and Mabel, all come for Christmas.

David. You have a pretty houseful. I'm glad we don't live in houses.

Landlady. You might do better if you did. Anyhow, I don't see how you're going to manage now that Squire Herod's ordered you off his land.

[*Once more there are angry murmurs, but this time more subdued, for the gipsies have not forgotten the mother and child.*]

Elijah. It's not the way he's treated us that's so bad. We're used to it from everybody. But when it comes to his having the Reverend John Baptist run in for what all folks know he's never done . . .

[*More murmuring and cries of "Shame!"*]

Landlady. Shush, will you!

Elijah [*continuing in a hoarse whisper*]. Nobody ud be fool enough to think he'd poach so much as a rat's tail in Sowden. He goes in the woods, 'cos that's his way. He'd sooner preach in the woods than in chapel. Many's the sermon he's preached to us in the woods—all against poaching and thieving too.

David. It ain't nothing to do with the poaching. That's only Squire Herod's excuse. What's made him angry is that the Reverend John has bin talking to him about Mrs. Herod.

Landlady [*tossing her head*]. And quite right too. We ain't used to such goings on in these parts.

David. Well, I understand he talked to him straight. One of our people heard what he said once when he met

them both in the drive at Cock Marling. "It isn't lawful for you to have her," he says—just like that.

Landlady. I hope things won't go hardly with him, but it all sounds bad. I've always had a liking for the Reverend John Baptist. He was never what you might call a friendly chap, but he preached a good gospel.

Elijah. That's right—a good gospel—"Repent ye," he'd say, "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Hannah. I hope no harm ull come to him, poor soul.

Miriam. But I fear . . .

Old Eva. Aye, we all fear for the Reverend John Baptist now Squire Herod's got him.

[*While they have been talking,* ELIJAH *has been looking out of the window. Now he turns round suddenly into the room.*]

Elijah. Here he is!

Landlady. Who? John Baptist?

Elijah. No. Squire Herod and Mrs. Herod—coming in here. [*There is a commotion.*]

Moses. What can he be after?

David. Us, for certain.

Landlady. More likely the poor innocent just born.

[*The door opens. Enter* SQUIRE HEROD, MRS. HEROD *and* SALOME, *her daughter by her first marriage. The* SQUIRE *wears a square bowler, which he does not remove, riding breeches and leggings. He is a dark, florid man, with Semitic hints about him.* MRS. HEROD *is frankly American. She wears a small hat with a float-*

ing veil, and large, horn-rimmed spectacles. SALOME *is a tall flapper, pretty, and stylishly dressed, but looking both precocious and silly.*]

Herod [*striding up to the counter*]. Well, Mrs. Ades, what's all this I hear?

Landlady [*sulkily*]. I'm sure I don't know, sir.

Herod. About this child born at the Plough.

Landlady. There ain't no child born at the Plough, sir.

Herod. But I've been told there is—the child of some travelling tinkers or such. I've said before, and I say it again [*glaring round at the gipsies*], I won't have any vagrancy in the parish.

David [*with the whine of the professional gipsy*]. Surely you don't take us for vagrants, your honour. We're poor people, but we're gentle people, as we say. Each one of us comes of a royal family.

Herod. Don't talk nonsense to me, fellow. I say you're a lot of raggle-taggle gipsies. But it ain't you I've come after this time. I've come about that child.

Landlady. And I've told you there ain't no child.

Mrs. Herod [*coming up to the counter, and speaking with a strong American accent*]. Sure, Mrs. Ades, you needn't think we'd harm the little thing if there was. All my husband wants is for the poor little stranger to be put in the workhouse infirmary and properly cared for this bitter weather.

Landlady. It'll be properly cared for here—leastways, it would be properly cared for if it was here, but it ain't.

Mrs. Herod. They told us down at the village that a poor person's child had been born in your stable.

Landlady. They talk a lot o' nonsense down at the

village. [*A bright idea strikes her.*] I tell you what it is. You've heard the tale of my Buttercup having calved to-night.

The Gipsies. Ho! Ho!

That's it, missus!

Your Buttercup has a gorgeous Christmas calf.

Herod. Well, I'm going to see, anyway.

David [*placing himself with the other male gipsies between* HEROD *and the yard door*]. No, you don't!

Herod. Get out of the way. Who are you to stop me?

David [*with dignity*]. I am a king.

Mrs. Herod. Come, dear, don't fight them. It isn't worth it. We can send a policeman up to look.

Elijah. Yes, you find the police mighty useful, don't you? You've made them shut up the Reverend John Baptist because he told you the truth.

Herod. It's a lie. He's in gaol for poaching. My keepers found him in Sowden, with a rabbit in his pocket.

Elijah. And 'twas put there. A likely tale for a chapel minister to go poaching rabbits, and him preaching at us for the same all these years. No, sir. The Reverend John Baptist was put in prison because he told you the truth about yourself and Mrs. Herod here.

Mrs. Herod. Oh, you dreadful man! How dare you!

Elijah. He said "It isn't lawful for you to have her," just like that. And you had him jugged for speaking the truth.

Mrs. Herod. It isn't the truth. It's a lie. My divorce is perfectly legal in Cesarea, Idaho.

Elijah. Well, this ain't Cesarea, Idaho. It's Udimore, Sussex. And we don't hold with folks that keep house with their brothers' wives.

Mrs. Herod. Oh! Oh! How dare you? Herod —what are you thinking of? Are you going to stand by and see me insulted? Aren't you any sort of a he-man? Why don't you do something?

Herod [*obviously frightened at the menacing looks of the company*]. I will in a minute—I—I mean at the proper time. Come out of this, my dear, and we'll go straight to the police.

Salome. Let's go back home, mom. The police can wait. We've scarce any time to dress for dinner as it is, and I want to look my dandiest for the dance.

Herod [*seeing the chance of a dignified exit*]. Yes, don't let's waste any more time here. Mr. Pilate, the Mayor, is coming to dinner, and Mr. Caiaphas, the Archdeacon, and Salome has promised to dance for us. Let's be off.

[*They march to the door. As they go out* HEROD *turns and says:*]

Herod. But don't think you've heard the last of this. You shall suffer, all of you, for your behaviour to-night—you and that ranter and that child which I know is in the stable.

[*Exit the* HERODS, *in great wrath.*]

Landlady [*fanning herself*]. Thank Heaven that's over. What a to-do! What vulgar people! It's hard to have the likes of them setting themselves up over us.

David. D'you think they'll go to the police?

Landlady. Not to-night. I know those dinners they have. There'll be nothing doing till they've slept it off to-morrow morning. Let's keep Christmas till then.

Moses. Aye, let's keep Christmas, and forget all about 'em.

[*There is a knock at the door. For a moment every one is startled.*]

Elijah. They've come back.
David. They wouldn't knock if they did.
Landlady. Come in.

[*The door opens. The* ANGEL OF THE LORD *comes in with the* THREE LOOKERS.]

Angel. Good evening, one and all.
All. Good evening, sir.

[*The gipsies cluster round him.*]

David. We're glad to see you this Christmas night.
Moses. It's long since we met.
Abraham. Not since I sat at the tent door.
Isaiah. Not since I saw you in the great Church, and you touched my lips with a coal.
Elijah. You brought me food once, when I was lost and starving.
Eva [*resentfully*]. You drove me out of the garden and wouldn't let me come back.
Angel. Yes, I've met most of you before this. But to-night we begin a new fellowship. Allow me to introduce my three friends—[*he presents*] Their Looker at Wickham, Their Looker at Leasan, Their Looker at Slinches. These three Lookers have come to see the child.
The Gipsies. Ah, the child!
Angel. You know about the child?

David. We know about him, though we have not seen him.

Moses. Sir, show us the child.

Angel. That is why I've come—to bring you all into the stable. These good shepherds were singing about the new-born Child when I found them on the marsh, and you yourselves have often sung of him. Isn't it true, David, that your gipsy lore is full of this night?

David. Indeed, the Lord himself said to the Child by my voice: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.

Abraham. And to me he said: And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Isaiah. And to me he said: A virgin shall conceive and be with child, and they shall call his name Emmanuel.

Angel. Yes, I know it. He has spoken by you all. So you have a right to go in and greet his Son.

Landlady. Well, let's all be going then. I'm sure the mother ull bid you welcome.

[*She opens the door at the back of the counter, and as she does so a wail floats through it, a child's cry. The* ANGEL'S *whole demeanour changes. He loses his debonair manner; he is as it were shocked, stricken. He falls back a pace or two, and his pinions droop.*]

Slinches. What was that?

Angel. The Word . . . spake.

[*They all crowd round to the door and out of it. Only the* ANGEL *remains crouching immovable, his face hidden.*]

Scene III

Scene : *The Stable at the Plough. It is a high-roofed barn, and the rafters show dimly in the light of the lanterns by which it is lighted. One lantern is fixed to a wooden column, supporting the roof as a cathedral pillar supports the vaulting. The other stands on a low stool beside the manger. In the manger lies the Baby asleep and wrapped in a shawl ; on either side of it, gazing upon the sleeping child in the lantern light, sit* Joseph *and* Mary. *He wears the clothes of a respectable artisan, dark and clumsy ; she wears a blue stuff gown, with a shawl over her head and shoulders after the manner of the gipsies. Behind them is the big stable door, opening out into the yard. The bottom half only is closed, and through the top can be seen haystacks and an oast-house in the bright winter moonlight. The door leading from the inn is on the right. On the left, behind the manger, a wide ladder or staircase leads up into the stable-loft, and on this, tier by tier, sits the* Angel Choir, *Angels dressed in white, but dim and indefinite in the lantern's glow and the shadows that come down from the roof.*

The Angel Choir *sings the Introit of the Midnight Mass of Christmas.*

Angel Choir. The Lord said unto me : Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.

Why do the heathen so furiously rage together: and why do the people imagine a vain thing?

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

The Lord said unto me: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.

[*As the song ceases, the door from the inn opens and the* GIPSIES *come filing in, with the* LANDLADY *and the* THREE LOOKERS.]

Landlady. I hope you'll forgive me, my love, but I've brought these folk in to wish you a happy Christmas.

Joseph [*rising*]. We are glad to see them.

Mary. They are our kinsfolk.

Joseph. We know them all. Why, this is good indeed. Here's Abraham and Moses and David and Elijah and Isaiah.

Mary. And Miriam and Hannah—yes, and old Eva herself has come. Greetings, Mother!

[EVA *comes hobbling towards* MARY.]

Mary [*kissing her*]. Eva!

Eva. Ave!

[*They embrace, and the* ANGEL CHOIR *sings "When Eva kissed Mary."*]

Choir. When Eva kissed Mary,
The whole earth was glad,
The little birds sang
For the joy that they had.

Her sins were forgiven
At Christ's happy birth;
" There's hope for me now, dears,"
Said old Mother Earth.
Sing Eva, sing Ave,
With old Mother Earth.

When Mary kissed Eva
The whole earth was fair,
There were flowers in the grass,
There were songs in the air.
Her sons were restored her
At Christ's happy birth;
" There's joy for me now, dears,
Said old Mother Earth.
Sing Eva, sing Ave,
With old Mother Earth.

[*The* GIPSIES *and the* LANDLADY *gather round* JOSEPH *and* MARY *and the sleeping* CHILD, *but the three* LOOKERS *remain by the door, too shy to join the others.*]

Joseph. Who are these three good men?

Landlady. I'm sure I don't know. They came in with the Angel of the Lord.

David. Where's the Angel?

Moses. Didn't he come in with us?

Elijah. No. He can't have, as he isn't here. What's happened, I wonder.

David. Here he is.

[*They all look towards the door, and the* ANGEL OF THE LORD *appears, with bent head and slow dragging footsteps. The* ANGEL CHOIR *sings.*]

Choir. Oh see my humility and deliver me, for I do not forget thy law.

Avenge thou my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

[*The* ANGEL *falls on his knees, with hands stretched out towards the* CHILD. *The company stares at him in some bewilderment.*]

Angel. I cannot bear to see thee so, a little lower than the angels. Thy throne, O God, endureth for ever and ever. Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the works of thine hands : they shall perish, but thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed ; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Mary [*clutching the* CHILD *to her bosom*]. Oh, my baby !

[DAVID *goes to the* ANGEL *and puts a hand upon his shoulder.*]

David. Be of good cheer, friend. Those words are true—I sang them myself once in a song. But you mustn't take them too much to heart. We're all here to be happy and friendly to-night, you and I and the child and the poor people—and those three lookers too, who daren't stand away from the door, poor fellows—I'll wager they're a bit scared with all this.

[*The* ANGEL *recovers himself and stands up.*]

Angel. You are right, David. Now is not the time for such thoughts, or rather for such words, for the thoughts are behind any words we say to-night. I came here to

show you the child, but I failed you because for a moment I could not see him as a child. You have seen him as a child, so now you must show him to me.

[DAVID *and* MOSES *lead the* ANGEL *to the manger.* MARY *lifts the shawl, and the* ANGEL *kneels and kisses the* CHILD'S *face.*]

Angel. Welcome, little baby. [*He rises and turns to the* THREE LOOKERS, *who still huddle together by the door.*] My friends, forgive me. I owe you a better welcome than this. Come to the manger. [*The* LOOKERS *come forward.*] Mary and Joseph, here is Their Looker at Wickham [*presenting him*], Their Looker at Leasan, and Their Looker at Slinches [*presenting them too*].

Joseph. We bid you welcome.

Mary. Is he not a lovely child?

[*The* THREE LOOKERS *bow the knee and pull their forelocks.* DAVID *comes forward with a fine gesture.*]

David. We all greet you. Let me introduce our company. The ladies first. Here [*presenting her*] is old Mother Eva, the oldest of us all, and, as we say, the Mother of all living. Here is Hannah, the mother of many fine children. Her eldest son, Samuel, is gone to be trained as a clergyman. Here is Miriam, who can dance, and play on the cymbals. [*He turns to the gipsy men.*] Here is Isaiah, who dreams dreams and sees visions, as, for that matter, do we all, though not so fine as his. Here is Elijah, who has led a roving life and seen strange places—he's always been in trouble with the gentry, and now Squire Herod's after him. Here are two very old men—Abraham, who

is nearly as old as Eva, and Moses, who used to rule this tribe before me. 'Twas he who brought them long ago from across the sea, and he was king of them all the time they were wandering up and down Wales. But one stormy night he was lost on a mountain, a wild Welsh mountain, and when he was found strange things had happened to him and the manner of his countenance was changed. So our people made me king instead, but he comes with us, and often talks of the strange things that happened when he was lost on the mountain in Wales.

Moses. Aye, strange things, terrible things. I have seen that which no other man has seen and lived.

David. He is also one of our singers. Come, folks, what do you say to some music now? Let us sing our songs before the young child.

All. Yes, let us have music—
Let us sing our songs—
Moses shall begin—
Moses, sing us "The Horse and his Rider"—
Aye, "The Horse and his Rider"!

Miriam. I will play for him on my cymbals.

[MIRIAM *takes a pair of cymbals out of her shawl, and clashes them rhythmically as old* MOSES *sings, standing, while the others sit in the straw of the stable.*]

Moses [*sings*]:

I will sing to the Lord
Who hath triumphed gloriously—
The horse and his rider
Are drowned in the sea.

The chariots of Pharaoh
Were harnessed with might,
His war-horses thundered
Through day and through night.
But the Lord is a warrior—
The Lord is his name:
He smote the Egyptian
And brought him to shame.

The waters were gathered
Right up in a heap,
And congealed were the floods
In the heart of the deep,
Till Pharaoh rode through them
All furiously.
Then the horse and his rider
Were drowned in the sea.

The people shall hear it,
Our terror shall spread,
Throughout Palestina
They know of our dread.
O Jehovah of Hosts,
Who is like unto thee?
The horse and his rider
Are drowned in the sea.

The great duke of Edom
Was mighty amazed,
The marquis of Moab
Turned weak as he gazed.

They were still as a stone
In the fear of thy might,
When thy people passed over
That terrible night.

The poor people's children
Went through on dry land,
All lowly and glad
For their Lord was at hand.
O sing to the Lord
Who hath triumphed gloriously,
The horse and his rider
Are drowned in the sea.

Angel. That's a good song, Moses.

David. It's all about the time when we came from the far country. I was only a little chap then, but they tell me the waters of the sea divided, and our people walked over without wetting a shoe. Then their enemies came after them, and the water rushed back and drowned the lot. Next morning our people saw them dead upon the sea shore.

Angel. It's a fine story, and I'm glad Moses has made a song of it. You have made songs too, David.

David. Indeed, I have made many songs.

Angel. And about this child. Sing us a song about the child.

All. Aye, sing us a song about the child.

David. I'll sing you the Song of the Two Lords.

All. That's a gorgeous song!
Sing us the Two Lords!

[DAVID *stands up and sings "The Two Lords' Song."*]

David. Two Lords across the heavens spake,
And like the poplar trees a-shake
The heavens shuddered at the word
That the Lord spake unto my Lord.

"Sit thou, O King, on my right hand,
Till thou hast smitten every land.
Be ruler over every foe
As forth from Sion thy thunders go.

"With offerings glad and offerings free
Shall a great nation worship thee:
The morning's womb did flood the earth
With dew as rivers at thy birth.

"An oath I never shall deny
I made thee from my throne on high,
An everlasting priest art thou,
A king to whom the world shall bow.

"O judge the heathen, smite the dead,
Then sweetly stoop thy crownéd head
To drink from out the wayside stream,
And bless thy Lord who blessed thy dream."

Two Lords across the heavens sped—
The heavens bowed, the heavens fled,
When swinging high his furious sword
The Lord rode off beside my Lord.

[*The* GIPSIES *clap their hands.*]

Miriam. I always liked that song, though I don't know what it means.

Joseph. Is it about the child?

David. Of course it is about the child.

Mary. I will keep all these sayings in my heart.

Angel. And now, perhaps one of our three Lookers has a song.

Elijah. Yes, let's have a song from them for a change.

[*The* THREE LOOKERS *giggle self-consciously and nudge each other.*]

Leasan. That ain't much in our line, sir.

Angel. You were singing lustily when I first saw you.

Wickham [*sniggering*]. There's old Mr. Stuppeny. He's the one to sing.

Slinches. Maybe I could sing a bit if some one ud play Spiffkins in F. Reckon that's the only piece I know—so as to sing praaper and as before quality, I mean.

Angel. Well, sing us the bit from Spiffkins in F.

Slinches. I don't know as I can rightly start it all by myself. Some one's got to give me the first part.

Angel. Here's the Angel Choir to do it.

Slinches. Do they know Spiffkins in F?

Angel. Of course they know it—well.

Slinches [*impressed*]. Do they, now! I'll tell Parson that when he takes the old music away and gives us new.

[WICKHAM *sniggers. The* ANGEL *looks at him sternly.*]

Angel. Sing it to us now, Mr. Stuppeny. We're all waiting to hear you.

[THE ANGEL CHOIR *starts to sing the Gloria in Excelsis Deo as musicked by one Spiffkins, a light of the eighteen-eighties. Take so much sweetness*

from Gounod, with a tinkle of Tours, so much meaninglessness from Stanford and Stainer, so much big noise from Silas, so much ineptitude from any organist-composer, and the result of the mixture is Spiffkins in F. It opens loudly and joyfully : "Glory be to God on High" (*pp. suddenly*) "and on earth peace, goodwill towards men" (*ff. just as suddenly*). "We praise thee, we bless thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

The voices cease. Every one looks towards the old shepherd, standing alone in the midst.]

Angel [*in a low voice*]. Now, Mr. Stuppeny.

Slinches [*singing towards the crib*]. O Lord the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father. . . .

[*At first it is only his cracked old voice straining and struggling at the notes.* WICKHAM *smiles at* LEASAN, *who shakes his head, a little ashamed. But gradually the* LOOKER'S *voice seems miraculously to acquire music, strength and youth.*]

Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer.

Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

[*He ceases.* MARY *and* JOSEPH *smile him their pleasure and congratulation. The* GIPSIES *nod approvingly at him and at each other. The* ANGEL *claps his hands, as, after a grudging interval, do* WICKHAM *and* LEASAN. *Meanwhile the* ANGEL CHOIR *has resumed Spiffkins in F, which seems to share in the musical apotheosis, and ends in not inglorious reminiscences of Gounod.*]

Angel Choir (*ff.*). For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord. Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father.

Scene IV

Scene: *The same as Scene III, and the company is as before, save that the* Landlady *is absent.* Mary *and* Joseph *are seated each side of the Manger, round which the* Gipsies *stand in a semicircle. The* Three Lookers *are grouped together on the left, on the right stands the* Angel of the Lord. *The heads of all are bowed, and the hands folded in prayer. The* Angel Choir *is in its old place and sings the Gradual of the Midnight Mass.*

Choir. In the day of Thy power shall the people offer thee free-will offerings with an holy worship: the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning.

The Lord said unto my Lord: sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Alleluya, alleluya! The Lord said unto me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Alleluya!

[*As they cease the* Landlady *comes in.*]

Landlady. My dear, more visitors have come to see our little love, and this time they're very grand people. May I bring them in?

Angel. Who are they?

Landlady. Three wise men from Oxford and Cambridge.

[*The Company is impressed.*]

Joseph. Do you feel able to see them, my dear?

Mary. They're welcome since they've come so far.

Landlady. They've driven all the way in a motor.

Joseph. How did they know about the child?

Landlady. They say they read about him in their books.

Angel. Go and bring them in.

[LANDLADY *goes out, and as she closes the door the* ANGEL CHOIR *sings.*]

Choir. All they from Saba shall come bringing gold and incense, and shall show forth the praises of the Lord.

Arise and shine, O Jerusalem: for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

Alleluya, alleluya! We have seen his star in the east, and are come with offerings to worship the Lord. Alleluya.

[*While they are singing the door opens and the* THREE WISE MEN *from Oxford and Cambridge come in. They are respectively an* ASTRONOMER, *a* BIOLOGIST *and a* MATHEMATICIAN. *The* ASTRONOMER *is an old man with a long white beard, the* BIOLOGIST *is middle-aged, the* MATHEMATICIAN *quite young. They advance rather diffidently towards the Manger.*

The ANGEL OF THE LORD *comes forward to greet them.*]

Angel. Welcome, gentlemen. I'm glad to see you. Here is the Marvel. Here is the World's Wonder.

Mathematician [*speaking in an Oxford voice*]. Yes, we are all glad to be here. Now we see the End of our Sciences.

Biologist [*speaking in a Cambridge voice*]. And the Beginning.

Angel. Did you come easily to Udimore?

Astronomer [*speaking in the slow, meticulous voice of cultivated old age*]. All went well till we were within a few miles. Then we lost ourselves—the cross roads were confusing. But we stopped at a Manor House and they set us on the way.

Angel. Which Manor was it?

Astronomer. I believe it is called Cock Marling.

[*There is a stir in the company.*]

Angel. And you saw the Squire?

Biologist. Yes. The Squire was at dinner, but when he heard from the butler what we wanted he came out himself and spoke to us. He said he had heard that a child was born in the stable of the Plough at Udimore, though he himself had not seen it. He bade us go and give our greetings, and then call in on our way back and tell him if it was indeed as he had been told.

The Company. Phew!
Ah!
That old fox!
Shame!

[*The* WISE MEN *look surprised.*]

Biologist. Have we done wrong?

Angel. You must on no account go back to Cock Marling. Squire Herod has a grudge against this child, and will do him some harm if he finds him. However, there's no danger at the present moment, and you can easily go back to Oxford and Cambridge by another way.

Astronomer. Yes, we can go by the Kent road.

Angel. That will be best. But now tell me, how is it that you heard the child was born?

Mathematician. I was working in my study and I found the Sum of all the Universe and the Number of its Name. Then I knew that Christ was born.

Biologist. I was working in my laboratory, and I saw inorganic matter come to life and life to consciousness. Then I knew that Christ was born.

Astronomer. I was working in my observatory, and I saw that a new star had risen over against the Pole where the Dragon stood no more. Then I knew that Christ was born.

Mathematician. So we have all come to bring him our gifts, the instruments by which we found him.

[*The* MATHEMATICIAN *displays a measure and compasses, the* BIOLOGIST *holds up a microscope, and the* ASTRONOMER *a quadrant and map of the stars. They turn, and going solemnly to the Manger, present their gifts to the* CHILD, *kneeling. As they offer them the* ANGEL CHOIR *sings the Offertory of the Midnight Mass.*]

Choir. Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad before the Lord: for he is come.

Angel. Well done—well given. And now let me introduce you to three other friends of mine, who can give you the only wisdom that you lack. Come, let me present you—Mr. Mathematician, Their Looker at Wickham—Mr. Biologist, Their Looker at Leasan—Mr. Astronomer, Their Looker at Slinches.

[*The* THREE WISE MEN *shake hands with the* THREE LOOKERS *and the* ANGEL CHOIR *sings "Shepherds and Sages."*]

Shepherds and sages
  Come and adore.
Seek no further and
  Seek no more.

The sage travelled far
  With a map and machine,
The shepherd came clodhopping
  Over the green.

One crossed a country
  The other a stile,
One came a month's march
  The other a mile.

No matter the way
  Or the distance they came,
The end of the journey
  Was just the same.

Shepherds and sages
  Met at the tryst,
Wisdom and innocence
  Meet in Christ.

Shepherds and sages,
  Kneel and adore.
Here is the mystery,
  Seek no more.

[*Enter* LANDLADY.]

Landlady. The news has got about. More folk have come. Here's a parson and a beggar and all the little

school-children waiting in my bar and asking me if they may come and look at the baby.

Angel. Who is the parson? Not Mr. Archdeacon Caiaphas?

Landlady. Oh no, sir. He's dining with Squire Herod to-night. This is Mr. Stephen from Winchelsea, and he's not a proper parson, as you might say—at least he's not quite finished yet.

Angel. I see—in deacon's orders.

Landlady. That's it. But in spite of his being only just begun, they do say that he's an unaccountable clever and promising young man. Does a lot of good among the poor, and preaches lovely.

Elijah. But I hear he's in trouble with Archdeacon Caiaphas and some of the other great parsons. They don't hold with all he does.

Wickham. Bishop Saul of Chichester threatened to put him out of the Church, I'm told.

Landlady. Dear, dear! I've always found him so pretty spoken, and an unaccountable good-looking lad.

Angel. Bring him in.

[*As the* LANDLADY *goes out to bring in* MR. STEPHEN *the* ANGEL CHOIR *sings:*]

Angel Choir. Princes, moreover, did sit and did witness falsely against me: and the ungodly pressed sore upon me: O Lord my God, stand up to help me, for Thy servant is occupied continually in Thy commandments.

[*During the singing young* MR. STEPHEN *the Deacon comes in. He is dressed in cassock and surplice, with his deacon's stole worn over his shoulder. He is handsome, young and shy, and,*

saluting the ANGEL OF THE LORD, JOSEPH *and* MARY, *comes diffidently to the manger.*]

Stephen. I see the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of the power of God. Alleluya.

[*Enter* LANDLADY *with old* JOHN, *the blind beggar, leaning on her arm. He is an immensely old man with a long white beard, and carries a lantern which he holds before him.*]

Angel Choir [*sings*]. In the midst of the congregation he opened his mouth : and the Lord filled him with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, he clothed him with a robe of glory.

[*The* ANGEL OF THE LORD *takes old* JOHN'S *hand from the* LANDLADY'S *and leads him towards the manger. The old man gropes for the baby's face, strokes it and peers at it, while the* ANGEL *holds the lantern over the sleeping* CHILD.]

John [*turning to the company*]. That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. This then is the message which we declare unto you : that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Landlady. Shall I let the school-children come in? They want terribly to come and see the little child, but I thought maybe they'd be too noisy.

Angel. What says the mother? Will they be too noisy and too many?

Mary. Oh no, let them come, the pretty innocents.

[*Exit* LANDLADY.]

Angel Choir. Out of the mouth of very babes, O God, and of sucklings, hast thou perfected praise: because of thine adversaries.

[*The* SCHOOL CHILDREN *come dancing in, hand in hand, in a string, to the tune of "Boys and girls come out to play." They dance gaily round the manger, till the* ANGEL OF THE LORD *claps his hands.*]

Angel. Not so much noise, children. The little baby must sleep. Besides, we don't want Squire Herod to hear us.

School Children. O-o-o!

Hush, hush, hush, here comes the Bogey Man!

O-o-o! [*They subside into giggles, standing in a half ring round the manger, in front of the* GIPSIES.]

Angel. Is everybody here?

Landlady. As far as I know.

[*Distant bells are heard ringing.*]

Leasan. Hullo! There go Brookland bells down on the Marsh.

[*Another peal is heard mingling with the first.*]

Slinches. And Fairfield. They're ringing at Fairfield.

[*The bells grow louder and nearer.*]

Wickham. That's Rye.

David. And up on the coast. I hear Playden.

Elijah. And Iden.

Moses. And Peasmarsh.

Hannah. And Beckley.

Isaiah. And Guldeford.

Miriam. And Winchelsea.

Eva. Oh! Oh! Oh! And all the dead churches of Broomhill that were drowned in the year of the Flood.

[*The noise of the bells becomes deafening and the company*—GIPSIES, SHEPHERDS, CHILDREN, *even the* WISE MEN—*show signs of fear.*]

Angel. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of the Canterbury bells.

All [*excitedly*]. Canterbury bells! Canterbury bells!

[*The sounds of galloping horses mingle with the bells. They clatter in the yard. The door swings open, and in dashes* ST. THOMAS À BECKET, *Archbishop of Canterbury, vested for Mass, with his deacon and sub-deacon in dalmatic and tunicle. He is a big, splendid man, dark and with hawklike eye—by every token the "turbulent priest" of whom Henry sought riddance to his undoing.*]

Angel Choir. Rejoice we all in the Lord, keeping holy day in honour of blessed Thomas the Martyr: in whose passion the Angels rejoice and glorify the Son of God.

Angel. Welcome, mighty prelate! Welcome, Canterbury!

Thomas [*breathlessly*]. I was at Midnight Mass in my Cathedral Church of Canterbury, and the sub-deacon had just sung the last note of the epistle, when they brought me the message "Christus natus est." I leaped into the

saddle, and galloped off with my ministers, and as we thundered over the roads, all the three marshes of Walland, Dunge and Romney sang the Gradual together : " In the day of thy power shall the people offer thee freewill offerings with an holy worship : the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning." It is right and fitting that an Anglican archbishop at Mass in his Cathedral, should ride over to greet the Christ between the Epistle and the Gospel. It is to my everlasting joy that the Son of God was born in the village of Udimore in the Province of Canterbury, and here I decree that in memory of this night every Anglican bishop shall henceforward wear riding clothes for ever and ever.

Angel Choir [*sings " The Anglican Bishop " to the tune of " Bonnie Dundee "*].

The Anglican Bishop, so gay and so grand,
With his cross on his breast and his ring on his hand
Goes girded and gaitered, all ready to ride,
Because of the gallop of one Christmastide.
O, Mr. Archdeacon, come hurry, my man,
To saddle, to saddle, as fast as you can.
Go galloping, galloping, over the lea,
For the Saviour is born, and we ride there to see.

The mighty Archbishop was vested in state,
In cope and in mitre, as suits a prelate.
But when he was told that the Saviour was near
He mounted his horse and rode off with a cheer.
His deacon and sub-deacon out they both ran—
" To saddle, to saddle, as quick as you can !
St. Thomas goes riding in haste and in awe
To worship the Lord in his stable of straw."

Let each Anglican bishop henceforward, says he,
Be gaitered and girt in a pattern of me,
Who rode through the midnight, my Saviour to greet,
And lay all my province in love at his feet.
So bring me my gaiters, Archdeacon my man,
My hat and my apron as fast as you can.
For I must go galloping over the lea.
The Saviour is born and I ride there to see.

Thomas [*to his* MINISTERS]. Come, fathers, we cannot wait. Already the pale gleam is on the dykes of the Marsh, and in my Cathedral the Canons sing " The Lord be with you." We must return to greet them " And with thy spirit," that the Holy Gospel may begin and the world may know that Christ is born.

[ST. THOMAS *and his* MINISTERS *make their reverence to the manger as to the Altar at the end of Mass, and without further greetings go out to the resumed clashing of Canterbury bells. The bells rise to terrible music, then die away. The* ANGEL OF THE LORD *comes into the midst of the company.*]

Angel. You heard what the Archbishop said? He said that already the pale gleam is on the dykes of the Marsh. The morning is not far off. Our rejoicings for the time must cease. The Mother's head droops. She is weary. My good friends, we have met very pleasantly here, but now it is time to go. You, children [*to the* SCHOOL CHILDREN], are already beginning to yawn—be off with you at once.

[*The* SCHOOL CHILDREN *join hands as before and run out in a string to the tune of "Salvete flores martyrum."*]

Landlady [*taking old* JOHN *by the hand*]. And it's time this old man had his rest. I'll see him home. [*Leads old* JOHN *to the door. On the threshold he turns back, lifting high his lantern.*]

John. And we beheld his glory, even as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

All. Thanks be to God.

Stephen. I must be going too, for I have to be up early this Christmas morning.

Angel. Good night, Mr. Stephen, and may the Lord deliver you from your persecutors.

Stephen. No doubt he will deliver me in his own way and his own time. [*He goes out.*]

Angel [*to the* THREE LOOKERS]. And now, my three good friends, you may return to your sheep. I warrant that you will never have had a better lambing than that which took place while you were away paying your duty to the Lamb of God.

Leasan. I'd be sorry for Squire to think Christmas a good time for lambing.

Angel. I'm afraid that after this he will. You will be surprised when you get back to the Marsh.

Leasan. And the ewes?

Angel. Not one of 'em lost.

Leasan. Well, I'm sure we're very grateful to you, sir, for all you've done for us.

Wickham. You've shown us a fine sight.

Slinches. One that we'll never disremember. And

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reckon I'll be able to bear that furrin music in Church to-morrow—or maybe I should say this marnun—seeing how I've heard Spiffkins sung by angels to-night and sung wud them too myself.

Leasan. Now don't you go boasting, Mr. Stuppeny.

Slinches. I'll make sure as all the parish knows.

Angel. Come, come, don't argue. It's time you were off—young men to work, old men to bed. Good morning and good night.

The Three Lookers. Good night, sir.

Good night.

A Merry Christmas.

And thank you kindly.

[*The* THREE LOOKERS *are about to go out when the* THREE WISE MEN *come forward.*]

Mathematician. I was going to suggest that we give them a lift in our car down to the Marsh.

Biologist. There's plenty of room.

Astronomer. And we're going back by the Kent road.

Angel. Yes, don't go by Cock Marling on any account. You know which road to take? Drive straight to Rye, and through the town, and then turn northward at Guldeford. Your way lies by Iden and over Wet Level to the Isle of Oxney. God-speed.

[*The* LOOKERS *and the* WISE MEN *go out together.*]

Slinches [*as they go*]. Reckon it ull be fine to ride in a motoring car with the Three Wise Men. Reckon that ull be another thing for me to tell the neighbours. [*Exit.*]

Angel [*turning to the* GIPSIES]. And you, my friends, who have to-night seen your songs come to life and your dreams come true, it is time that you too went out again.

You are wanderers and outlaws, you never pitch your camp for more than a few days, but now, no matter how far you wander, you have a home. Your home is here. Here is open house, and every wanderer's rest. Meanwhile, your God goes with you, in the fire and in the cloud, as he went before. You are not fatherless, for doubtless he is your Father, and you are not childless, for unto you this night a Child is born, unto you a Son is given.

David [*coming forward and standing before the manger*]. My people and I will pray before we go.

[*The* GIPSIES *stand with bowed heads while he prays.*]

David [*prays*]. O Lord God of our Fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob; God of the height and of the deep; of the houses of the stars, of the sweet influences of sun and rain; God of the roads and of the fields and of the marshes and of the waters; hear the prayer of thy servants and speed them in their ways wheresoever they may wander. Dwell with them in the fire of their camp and in the clouds that race their footsteps in the sky, dwell with them in their songs and in their dances, in their pleasures and adversities, joys and griefs, and bring them at last, of the goodness of this night, to the Promised Land, to the home and the rest that await them at the journey's end, and the Supper thou hast spread for them at the fall of the day, in the land which thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his seed, Who livest Almighty for ever and ever. Amen.

[*The* GIPSIES *file out, and as they go the* ANGEL CHOIR *sings.*]

Angel Choir.

The poor people's children
  Went through on dry land,
All lowly and glad
  For their Lord was at hand.
O sing to the Lord
  Who hath triumphed gloriously—
The horse and his rider
  Are drowned in the sea.

[*The* GIPSIES *take up the refrain and sing it as their voices die away.*]

Gipsies [*singing refrain*].

The horse and his rider
  Are drowned in the sea,
The horse and his rider . . .
The horse and his rider . . .

[*Already the dawn is appearing in the sky. The oast-house and the haystacks are outlined against a pinkish grey, and a pearly light is fighting with the lanterns in the stable. The* ANGEL OF THE LORD *turns to* JOSEPH, *who has risen and leans upon his staff.*]

Angel. I fear the Mother must be tired. I will leave you now. You have time for a few hours' sleep, then I advise you to pack up at once and go off into Kent before Herod sends the police here.

Joseph. What about my farm? I came here to see to the taxing of Lower Float which belongs to my family.

Angel. You can come back again. When Herod's wrath is over I will bring you word. But meanwhile

there is no safety for the young child and his mother this side of the Kent Ditch. So get to rest now in preparation for the journey.

Joseph. We will, and thank you for your warning.

[*The* ANGEL *goes to the door.*]

Angel. The dawn is here, though not yet the day. We have passed from midnight to Aurora. Lux fulgebit. Light shall shine to-day upon us : for unto us the Lord is born. Fare you well. [*With arm uplifted in salute he goes out through the open door.*]

[JOSEPH *goes up to* MARY *and puts his arm round her for a moment. He then returns to his old place on the further side of the Manger, but this time he kneels.* MARY *kneels down too, and for a minute they form the conventional group of the Christmas crib*—MARY *and* JOSEPH *and the* YOUNG CHILD *lying in a manger. The daylight deepens as the* ANGEL CHOIR *sings the Communion of the Midnight Mass of Christmas.*]

Angel Choir. The dew of Thy birth : is of the womb of the morning.

[*A cock crows.*]

THE END

THE SHEPHERD OF LATTENDEN

A PASSION PLAY IN SIX SCENES

CHARACTERS

THE SHEPHERD OF LATTENDEN.

PETER, JAMES, JOHN — His three companions.

ANDREW, THOMAS, PHILIP, BARTHOLOMEW, MATTHEW, SIMON, JUDE, JAMES — Eight other disciples.

JUDAS—a disciple who betrayed him.

THE SHEPHERD'S MOTHER.

MARY MAGDALENE.

ANOTHER MARY.

SALOME.

JOANNA.

PONTIUS PILATE—Mayor of Rye.

ARCHDEACON CAIAPHAS

CANON ANNAS.

TWO ANGELS.

THE ANGEL CHOIR.

Scene I
A Street in Rye.

Scene II
The Hop-garden at Doleham.

Scene III
An Ante-room in Rye Town Hall.

Scene IV
Kitchen at a Farmhouse near Battle.

Scene V
Garden of Little Park Manor, near Battle.

Scene VI
Lattenden-on-the-Marsh.

THE SHEPHERD OF LATTENDEN

Scene I

Scene : *A Street in Rye. Night has fallen and a few stars prick the sky above the gables. The window of an upper room in one of the houses is lit with yellow lamplight, against which shadows are seen to move. The street is empty, and unlit. But the paschal moon is in the heavens, and her light pours down upon the pavement and the cobblestones, almost as bright as day.*

The Angel Choir sings invisibly :

The sun is set, the shadows creep,
  The supper in the house is spread,
And he, the Shepherd of his sheep,
  Gives them his body for their bread.

The traitor's wicked plans are laid,
  The feet of foemen gather round,
But he, good Shepherd, unafraid,
  Pastures his flock in a fair ground.

He gives them strength and joy to eat
  —Strength of his flesh, joy of his blood—
His heart is broken for their meat,
  His soul is offered for their food.

Then to the Vale he goes alone—
  Only the Shepherd's feet shall tread
The darkness where that Wicked One
  Who steals his lambs is ambushéd.

[*During the singing the shadow of the* SHEPHERD *within has broken shadowy bread and given it to shadowy forms moving against the lamplight. As the hymn ceases* CANON ANNAS *and* ARCHDEACON CAIAPHAS *enter the street below from opposite ends. They meet just under the Upper Room.*]

Caiaphas. Well met, dear man.

Annas. Well met, indeed. [*They shake hands and pat each other on the back.*]

Caiaphas. How goes our little plot?

Annas. Capital. I think you'll find everything pass off very smoothly.

Caiaphas. It'll be all over before Easter, I trust.

Annas. Oh yes, yes. You can depend on that.

Caiaphas. I really shouldn't like to have anything at all unpleasant happen on the festival. Apart from one's wish to keep the day holy one might have trouble with the crowds. They say he has a great influence over crowds.

Annas. Yes, so I've heard. Those violent, ignorant types often do—sort of animal magnetism, I suppose. Of course one feels dreadfully sorry about it all. [*He sighs heavily.*] But it really can't be allowed to go on.

Caiaphas. No, no. Of course not. Something must be done, and naturally one's first consideration must be the Church and country in general. Better that one man should die than have the whole Church involved, and the Romans get us in the end.

Annas. And take away our Church and nation.

Caiaphas. That's it, that's it. We can't allow these fanatics to turn the whole world upside down.

Annas. Well, once we get the ringleader . . . by the way, I came to meet the excellent Judas. He's in there [*pointing to the house*], but he said he'd come out directly they'd finished supper.

Caiaphas. Are they all in there?

Annas. Yes, I believe so. Mrs. Vidler lets them have an upstairs room whenever they want it for their meetings and such. Judas said they would be coming in from Udimore to keep the festival, and he'd meet me here and let me know where they'd be to-night.

Caiaphas. To-night?

Annas. Yes, quite late. Then we can get him at once, and quietly—Pilate can try him to-morrow—and it'll all be over before the festival.

Caiaphas. Capital, my dear fellow. How splendidly you've organized it.

Annas [*rubbing his hands*]. I rather pride myself on my organization. But hark! I hear footsteps in the house—coming downstairs. That must be Judas.

[*They look expectantly at the door. The* ANGEL CHOIR *sings.*]

Angel Choir.

℣. Judas, that wicked trader, sold his Lord with a kiss.
℟. It had been good for that man if he had not been born.

[JUDAS *comes out of the door. He is a sullen looking country bumpkin, and receives rather churlishly the clergymen's greeting.*]

Annas. Well, my good man, so you've kept your bargain with us.

Judas. They're going to Doleham gardens.

Annas. The hop-gardens?

Judas. That's right. They'll be there in a couple of hours.

Annas. And so will we. I can arrange for the police to be round by—let me see—ten-thirty. I suppose your party mean to stay some time?

Judas. Reckon they do—preaching and praying. Shall I go wud them or come wud you?

Caiaphas. You'd better come with us, to show us the way. Meet us outside the Town Hall in half an hour.

Judas. Surelye. [*He shambles off, looking very hang-dog about it all.*]

Caiaphas. Capital fellow, Judas.

Annas. Yes, indeed. He's charging us rather heavily, though—thirty pounds—a lot to ask. But we're not exactly in a position to bargain. We can easily raise the money—a bazaar, perhaps, or a sale of work. . . .

Caiaphas. Quite so. Anyhow, I'm glad he's got away from that gang. I believe he joined them with high hopes, but soon found it was all moonshine—and worse.

Annas. That Shepherd must be quite impossible—the mentality of a Maltese peasant, I should say.

Caiaphas. But devout.

Annas [*shrugging*]. And blasphemous. [*He takes the Archdeacon's arm and they stroll off down the street together.*]

Caiaphas [*as they go*]. I should have thought the kind of company he keeps would put him out of repute with decent people.

Annas. It has. Only the poorer classes will have anything to do with him now. . . .

[*The street is empty for a moment, then footsteps are heard once more within the house, but this time*

it is many footsteps. The door opens and the SHEPHERD *comes out with his companions. He wears a shepherd's smock.* PETER, JAMES *and* JOHN *are fishermen, wearing jerseys and loose trousers, with gold rings in their ears. The others are dressed in the style of labourers and small tradesmen, except* MATTHEW, *who looks fairly prosperous, with a gold chain across his waistcoat, and* SIMON, *who is in a semi-clerical outfit, as if he belonged to a religious society.*]

The Shepherd. You will all forsake me to-night, for it is written : I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. But after I am risen again, I will go before you to the Marsh, and wait for you to come to me.

Peter. I never will forsake you. All the others may forsake you, but I never will.

The Shepherd. Indeed. But I tell you, Peter, that before the cock crows to-morrow morning you will deny that you ever knew me.

Peter. I will do no such thing. I'd sooner die.

The Others [*clamouring loudly*]. So would we all——
We'd sooner die——
We'll never forsake you——
We'd sooner die !

[*They go off down the street, the company protesting, the* SHEPHERD *walking calmly in their midst.*]

Scene II.

Scene: *The Hop Garden at Doleham. The Easter moon is bright. She is like a ship sailing the dark waters of the sky. Though she rides smoothly there is about her an air of terror, as if once more the waters of space were in storm. Her radiance has wiped out the stars. It sweeps down into the hop-garden of Doleham, bathing it in a flood of light so brilliant that colours are visible—the green of the hedge, with the yellow clumps of the primroses beneath it, the green of the young bines, only half-way to their crowns. Over the hedge rise the oast-houses of Doleham, their roofs shining red in the celestial light. A distant song is heard. It draws nearer, and the words of a psalm are distinguishable.*

Voices. Hear me, O Lord, for thy loving-kindness is comfortable: turn thee unto me according to the multitude of thy mercies.

And hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble: O haste thee and hear me.

Draw nigh unto my soul and save it: O deliver me because of mine enemies.

[*The* Shepherd *enters the hop-garden with* Peter, James *and* John, *singing as they walk. They look tired and beaten.*]

Disciples [*singing*]. Thou hast known my reproof, my

shame and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all in thy sight.

Thy rebuke hath broken my heart; I am full of heaviness: I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was no man, neither found I any to comfort me.

Peter [*breaking up the singing and throwing himself upon the ground*]. Reckon I'm tired.

James and John [*also throwing themselves down*]. And I——

And I.

[*The* SHEPHERD *remains standing before them.*]

Shepherd. I am full of heaviness.

Peter. So are we all. Master, sit down and rest. Reckon we've come further than we should ought.

[*The* SHEPHERD *shakes his head.*]

Shepherd. My soul is sorrowful. I am afraid. Wait here with me while I pray. Do not leave me.

Peter [*lazily*]. We aren't likely to run away, Shepherd. We're too mortal tired.

[*The* SHEPHERD *looks at them sadly, then goes off among the hop-bines which have made him a tent of shadow. The three disciples settle themselves under the hedge. The voices of hidden and grieving angels are heard. Their singing is like the sigh of the wind through the hedge and through the hop-bines—there are tears in it like hidden water. It is sweet, and not quite human, for the angels do not grieve as man,*

their grief belongs to the ages before the world began, and is like the voice of stars singing sorrowfully together.]

Angel Choir.

℣. In the hop-garden he prayed, saying
O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me.
The Spirit indeed is willing
But the flesh is weak.

℟. Watch and pray
That ye enter not into temptation.
The spirit indeed is willing
But the flesh is weak.

John. Did you hear that? Was that music?

Peter. I don't like it. I'm afraid here.

[*They huddle closer to one another.*]

James. I don't like any of it—anything that's happening now. It's all changed, somehow. We were doing valiant, and now—I don't know what it is, but it's different.

Peter. Let's have a bit of sleep.

John. He asked us to keep watch.

James. He's gone away. He's forgotten all about us.

Peter. He can't expect us to keep awake all night.

John. We might put up a bit of a prayer.

James. You can if you like. I'm too sleepy. Look—Peter's off.

[PETER'S *head has fallen on* JOHN'S *shoulder.* JAMES *drops his upon the other. For a moment* JOHN *sits manfully with head erect, eyes gazing into the darkness under the hop-bines, then his head*

too falls on his breast. There is silence for a while. Then the voice of the SHEPHERD *is heard in the distance, raised sharply and suddenly in great agony.*]

Shepherd [*off*]. Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but thine be done.

[*There is another silence, more terrible than any music. But the companions are not afraid. They are asleep. The voice of the* ANGELS *comes again like the voice of the moonlight.*]

Angel Choir.

V. My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death
Tarry ye here and watch with me.
Even now shall ye see the multitude
Which shall come about me.
Ye shall flee, and I go to be offered up for you.

R. Behold the hour is at hand,
And the Son of Man is betrayed to sinners.
Ye shall flee, and I go to be offered up for you.

[*The silence broods for an instant, then is rent again as with a sword. The voice of the* SHEPHERD *comes from the darkness.*]

Shepherd. Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it—thy will be done.

[*The* SHEPHERD *comes out into the moonlight. He looks round for his companions, then sees them sleeping under the hedge. He stands gazing down at them, while the invisible* ANGELS *sing, answering each other thus.*]

Angel Choir.

℣. What! Could ye not watch with me one hour
Who were ready to die for me?
Or see ye not Judas, how he sleepeth not,
But hasteneth to betray me?

℟. Why sleep ye? Watch and pray
That ye enter not into temptation.
Or see ye not Judas, how he sleepeth not,
But hasteneth to betray me?

[*The* SHEPHERD *stoops as if to wake the three disciples, but suddenly there is a muffled sound of footsteps and voices beyond the hedge. He straightens himself and looks swiftly up to the moon. As the sounds draw nearer the companions begin to wake, stretching themselves, and yawning.*]

Peter. What's that?

James. There's some one on the road.

John [*springing to his feet*]. He has come back, our Shepherd, and found us sleeping.

Shepherd. It is enough. The hour is come. [*He stands motionless by the little knot of his disciples.*]

Peter [*terrified*]. They're after us. They ve tracked us down.

James [*looking through the hedge*]. It's that scum Judas.

John. Oh Master, Master, whatsumever shall we do?

James. Let's get off quickly.

[*At that moment* JUDAS *comes creeping through the hedge. He runs to the* SHEPHERD *and kisses him shamefacedly.*]

Judas. Mäaster, Mäaster!

Shepherd. Why have you come, friend?

Judas. Mäaster, I want a word with you.

James. Don't trust him—he's up to no good. Come, let's get off while there's time.

[*At that a dozen of the rural constabulary break through the hedge, carrying torches and lanterns. Their truncheons are drawn and they advance towards the* SHEPHERD, *who stands motionless.*]

Shepherd. Are you come to take a thief?

Judas [*his embrace changing to a grip*]. Here he is. Hold him fast.

[*For some reason the constabulary do not come any further. They stand in a little huddle by the hedge.* JUDAS *suddenly drops his arms and shrinks back among them.*]

Shepherd. What have you come for?

A Voice. The Shepherd of Lattenden.

Shepherd. Here I am.

[*Still nobody moves. The* SHEPHERD *stands for a calm instant. Then challenges again.*]

Shepherd. What do you want?

A Voice. The Shepherd of Lattenden.

Shepherd. I've told you who I am. But if you want me, let these go [*pointing to the three disciples*].

[*Without waiting for the answer, the companions turn suddenly and disappear into the darkness of the hop-bines.*]

Shepherd. Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me?

[*The little band of captors now suddenly seems to recover its senses. It closes round the* SHEPHERD, *seizes him, and huddles him off through the torn hedge. The hop-garden is empty. The ship of the moon still sails the Easter midnight. The voices of the* ANGELS *creep through the silence.*]

Angel Choir.

℣. I was like a lamb that is innocent:
I was brought to the slaughter, and I knew it not:
Mine enemies have taken counsel against me,
Saying:
Come, let us put wood in his bread,
Let us root him out
From the land of the living.

℟. All mine enemies have taken counsel
And have spoken unjustly against me,
Saying:
Come, let us put wood in his bread,
Let us root him out
From the Land of the Living.

Scene III

Scene: *Ante-Room in Rye Town Hall. It is a large room, containing some interesting Tudor timberwork. The fireplace, in which a goodly fire burns, is a specially fine specimen of its period. A nail-studded door opens into the street, and another, on the right of the fireplace, leads into the main hall. A heavily mullioned window looks out on the dawn of an April day, and every now and then there is a flurry of rain against the glass and on the cobbles of the street. Between the showers stars drift among the blue spaces of a cloud-shredded sky. A lamp hangs from the ceiling, fighting the growing daylight. The room is full of people.* Peter *sits by the fire, with a little group of the Mayor's servants, male and female. The Rye Constabulary in their blue coats and peaked caps, stand round the walls and sing:*

Constabulary [*singing "The Mayor's Song"*].

Spring is in the morning, Spring is in the town
(Upstairs! Upstairs! Upstairs and down!)
No need for labour and no need for prayer,
Spring has come to Rye town by order of the Mayor.
The sun is in the sky.
Sing low, sing high,
For Pontius Pilate, Mayor of Rye.

Never such an Easter, never such a day—
Ten thousand merry men singing on their way.
Roads black with charabancs as far as you can spy.
The four corners of the world have all come to Rye.
The sun is in the sky.
Sing low, sing high,
For Pontius Pilate, Mayor of Rye.

Sing a song of Sussex welcoming the loads
Of cars and carts and charabancs that cover all the roads.
Good Friday's just the day to have a bit of fun,
Spring time and holiday together have begun.
The sun is in the sky.
Sing low, sing high,
For Pontius Pilate, Mayor of Rye.

Spring is in the morning, Spring is in the town
(White bread ! White bread ! White bread and brown !)
No need for labour and no need for prayer,
Spring has come to Rye town by order of the Mayor.
The sun is in the sky,
Sing low, sing high,
For Pontius Pilate, Mayor of Rye.

[*As the song ceases,* ARCHDEACON CAIAPHAS *and* CANON ANNAS *enter from the main hall.*]

Caiaphas. Well, how do you think it's going?

Annas. Oh, capitally, capitally—couldn't go better.

Caiaphas. I don't feel very sure of Pilate, though. The Shepherd amuses him, and I think he'd like to let him off.

Annas. I don't see how he can in the face of the evidence. After all, the man's own words, spoken in open court, are plain blasphemy enough. What was it he said?—" One

day you shall see me seated on the Right Hand of God and coming in the clouds of heaven." Could anyone want more than that?

Caiaphas. No. But Pilate's never been friendly towards the Church, and I think he sometimes enjoys a little blasphemy. However, as you say, he can't very well acquit on the evidence. But I hope he won't drag things out too much. It's already daylight, and soon all the Easter traffic will begin coming into the town. The road to Battle will be thick, and the crowds might get troublesome if they met him carrying his cross.

Annas [*clucking his tongue*]. Dear me, it's all very sad, this profanation of Good Friday. Our congregations get smaller and smaller—everybody seems to go off on wheels.

Caiaphas [*sighing*]. Yes, it's all very dreadful, very sad. . . . I don't know what the country's coming to—hullo! What's that?

[*There is a sound of scuffling outside the door. The policeman who guards the entrance is heard expostulating with some one who wants to come in.*]

A Voice. I doan't care. Let me pass. I want to see the clergymen.

Annas. It's Judas! Let him in.

[JUDAS *enters in the whirl of a shower. His face is white and his eyes are bloodshot. He glares at* ANNAS *and* CAIAPHAS.]

Caiaphas. My good man! . . .

Judas [*pulling at his trousers pocket*]. There it is. There,

täake your bloody money. [*He throws a handful of gold and silver pieces on the ground.*]

Annas. For shame to use such language here.

Judas. Reckon it's the truth I'm speaking. Reckon the money's bloody since it's the price of blood.

Annas and Caiaphas. Sssh!

Judas [*in a frenzy*]. Blood! Blood! I've betrayed the innocent blood! Oh, whatsumever shall I do?

Caiaphas [*coldly*]. Well, that's really no concern of ours. If you've any sense you'll pick the money up and go.

Judas. I woant touch it.

Annas. Come, my good man, don't be so unreasonable. If you throw the money away you'll be sorry for it later, and what's done can't be undone.

Caiaphas. Besides, you did perfectly right. You've helped rid the district of a notorious criminal.

Judas. I tell you he's innocent—and I've betrayed him. You bribed me to do it, you whited walls, you bloody sepulchres, you——

Annas and Caiaphas. Hush! Hush! This is dreadful. Such shocking language! Hush! Hush!

Judas (*flinging round desperately*]. Well, reckon I'm shut of you all. I'll go and hang myself. [*He goes out. The door swings behind him with a clang.*]

Caiaphas. I hope he doesn't mean that. He won't do himself any harm?

Annas. Oh, no, not he. They never do when they talk such a lot about it. Your genuine suicide is a most secretive person.

Caiaphas. Do you think he'll come back for the money?

Annas [*beginning to pick it up*]. He won't get it, anyhow.

Caiaphas. But, my dear man, we can't use it for church

purposes. After all, what he said was true in a sense. It *is* the price of blood.

Annas. Well, we needn't put it into the Church Fund, but it will come in extremely useful in other ways. For one thing it would just pay for that piece of the Old Brickfield we want to add to the cemetery.

Caiaphas. Yes, that could scarcely be called a Church purpose, since all denominations are buried there.

Annas. Of course ; and the enlargement is most necessary. [*He pockets the money.*]

[*The door into the Main Hall opens, and loud laughter is heard. The next moment* PONTIUS PILATE *comes into the ante-room. He is a short, elderly man, with purplish complexion and aquiline nose. He wears his mayoral robes and chain, and enters rubbing his hands and chuckling, well pleased with himself.*]

Pilate. They saw that. That got the " laughter in court " all right.

Annas. What was the joke, Mr. Mayor ?

Caiaphas. Mayn't we hear too ?

Pilate. Well, he kept on talking to me about the truth —that is when he would talk at all—so I just said, " What *is* truth ? " Ha ! Ha !

Annas and Caiaphas. Ha ! Ha ! [*They laugh dutifully, though they do not see the joke.*]

Pilate. Ha ! Ha ! That made 'em roar. What is truth ? Ha ! Ha !

Annas. Ha ! Ha !

Caiaphas. Ha ! Ha !

Pilate. But this is why I want to see you fellows.

Really, I don't feel happy about condemning him to death.

Caiaphas. But you must! You must condemn him to death. There's nothing else to be done now.

Pilate. I've gone into all the evidence most carefully, and I really can't see that he's as bad as you all make out.

Annas. But he said——

Caiaphas. But he threatened——

Annas. Blasphemy! Stark blasphemy!

Caiaphas. And sedition!

Pilate. On inquiry, a great deal of it seems to be rumour and exaggeration. The fellow appears to me an honest fanatic—no worse than that.

Annas. But he says he's a king. He's declared that openly, many times. If you acquit him——

Caiaphas. Yes, if you acquit him it will appear that you're no friend to the State.

Pilate [*uneasily*]. But he expressly declares that his kingdom is not of this world.

Caiaphas. That only makes him more dangerous! A heavenly king can defy earthly laws.

Annas. You're not exactly in a position to appear too lenient, Pilate. You remember that affair on the Marsh, and what the Powers that Be had to say about it.

Pilate [*irritably*]. Yes, yes, yes! But that was——

Caiaphas. If you let this fellow loose and he starts a revolution, you really would find yourself in a tight place.

Pilate. Oh, damn you! How you badger and drive a man! I suppose you're determined to have that poor chap's blood, and I suppose I've got to let you have what you want, or you'll crab me with the government. Very

well, then. His blood be on your head. I'm guiltless of it.

Caiaphas. We'll take the entire responsibility.

Pilate. All right then, have it your own way. [*To one of the Constabulary.*] Officer! Tell them to prepare the Cross.

[*Exit* OFFICER.]

Annas. And you'd better order a troop of soldiers to attend the execution. There may be riots——

Pilate. Oh, I'll see that you have all you need to protect your skins.

[PILATE *goes back into the Main Hall, fuming.* ANNAS *and* CAIAPHAS *follow with undisguised satisfaction. As they go a sudden gasp comes from the little group round the fire. A* MAID-SERVANT *gazes shrewdly at* PETER.]

Maid. I believe that you're one of them.

Peter. One of what?

Maid. One of the Shepherd's gang. I'm nearly sure now that I've seen you with them.

Peter. You've seen nothing of the kind, my girl. I've never had anything to do with that lot.

[*There is a brief silence.* PETER *warms his hands nervously. The girl looks hard at him, then whispers something to the man next her.*]

Man. Look here, I've seen you with him too.

Peter [*really frightened*]. 'A' done do with your idle talk. What a terrification you mäake about all this. I tell you I've never seen the Shepherd in my life.

Man (*grinning*). Well, you've got the Marsh speech,

anyway. " Terrification," you come from the Marsh all right. You're the Shepherd's countryman.

Peter. Damn you all ! I tell you I've never seen him. You're speaking a hem pack of lies. I don't know the fellow. I——

[*All heads are turned towards the door leading into the Main Hall. It has opened during* PETER'S *outburst and the* SHEPHERD *stands in the entrance between armed guards. At the same time the door into the street has opened noiselessly in the gathering dawn and the Cross is seen awaiting the* SHEPHERD, *who gives one long sad look at* PETER. *A cock crows.*]

Scene IV

Scene: *Kitchen of a Farmhouse near Battle. It is long past midnight, and the large, low-raftered room is lit only by a row of candles set in antique brass candlesticks upon the mantelshelf, above the dying gleeds of an old, red fire. The window is heavily curtained, the walls and corners of the room are dark—the furniture shows only as cumbrous shadows. In the middle of the room is a long, old-fashioned kitchen table, round which are huddled shapes, at first almost indistinguishable in the dim, reddish light, but gradually revealing themselves as the* Shepherd's *companions. There is also a little group of women—the* Shepherd's Mother, Salome, Joanna, Mary Magdalene *and another* Mary. *The* Shepherd's Mother *sits at the end of the table, leaning against* John, *who stands at her side with his arm about her. The other women are making flowers into wreaths and bunches—pale primroses and daffodils and Lent lilies and jonquils.*

[Mary Magdalene *stands up.*]

Mary Magdalene. The flowers are ready. Let us take them to his grave.

Joanna. Now? In the night?

Mary Magdalene. They'll lose their freshness here, and we may as well go while it's dark and no one can see us.

Salome. Yes, let's go now.

James. What fools you women are! What's the sense

of putting flowers on his grave? He can't see them or smell them any more.

Mary Magdalene. It's something we can do for him, at least.

Other Mary. It's all we can do.

[MARY MAGDALENE *begins to weep.*]

Peter [*irritably*]. Oh, 'a' done do with your sighing and crying. I can't bear no more. If that's how you're going on, get out.

Mary Magdalene. You watch your tongue, Peter. It's not for you to speak against anyone doing aught for your Shepherd, whom you denied.

Peter. Pert one! [*Then suddenly changing.*] Aye, but you speak true. I denied him. I denied that I ever knew him. I'm not worthy to be among you.

James. Nor are none of us, if it comes to that. We all bolted in the hop-garden. No one stood by him but these women here, so it ill becomes us to grumble at them. They went with him to Battle, they saw him crucified, when we were all hiding our heads and lying low. The women have done better than the men in the past three days, my masters, so let them go their way to-night in peace.

Peter and the Others. Aye, go your way in peace. And God bless you!

[*The* WOMEN *go out carrying their pale Spring flowers.*]

James [*looking at his brother*]. But one of us was at the Cross.

Andrew. Who? Which?

James. Our young man. He followed all the way from Rye to Battle, and was there till the end, with the Shepherd's mother.

Peter. Did he speak to you, John? Did he say anything?

John. Aye, he told me to take care of her, so I brought her home. [*He draws the* MOTHER'S *head against his shoulder.*]

Peter. But did he say aught about me?

John. No, he said naught about you.

James. Tell us what happened at his dying, John. You've never told us.

John [*hiding his face in his arm*]. I don't know as I can.

James. Come, speak up, brother. It's only kind to let us hear.

John. I dunno as there's much to tell. It was outside the Abbey—there on the Green the three crosses stood.

Peter. Three crosses?

John. Aye, there was two poachers crucified with him. Didn't you know? One of 'em was took in Sowden Wood.

Philip. Which way did you come to Battle?

John. By the Udimore road, and then across the Marsh at Brede Bridge, and up by Crowham and then westward at Benskins—across the Sedlescombe road, and turn off to Battle by Kent Street, and up Marley Lane.

Jude. Did many folk go with you?

John. Aye, an unaccountable lot of folk. The place was crowded, and policeman stood at the Mount turning the traffic off as it came into the town.

Andrew. Was there much traffic?

John. A fine lot by the sound. We could hear 'em all singing in the charabancs as they went by behind the houses. They didn't know naught of what was happening.

Bartholomew. Poor souls, reckon we mustn't blame them. They didn't know what they were doing.

John. That was what he said.

Matthew. The Shepherd? Did he speak?

John. Yes, he spoke. When they were nailing him to the Cross, and all the folks was shouting on the Green, he said "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And he spoke to one of them poachers that was crucified along of him, though I didn't rightly catch what he said, and he spoke to his mother and to me.

Peter. Was that all?

John. All that I can tell you. [*He shudders.*]

Peter. You must tell us. Did he speak of me?

John. I've told you—not a word.

James. What is it that you won't tell us?

John. Oh, 'a' done do wud your questions. I'll tell you some day, but I can't tell you now.

Simon. Did you see him die?

John. Yes, I saw him die, and it was the best sight. He just bowed his head and died, quiet as a child, and the soldier who watched at the Cross said, "I reckon that was a good man."

Peter (*passionately*). There was never a better man than our Shepherd.

[*A silence falls sharply and suddenly, all sit with bowed heads. Then the* ANGELS' *song of sorrow comes stealing among the shadows of the room as it stole among the shadows of the hop-garden. It is as if the Spring night had crept in weeping.*]

Angels' Song.

V. Our Shepherd, the fountain of living waters, is gone,
At whose going the sun was darkened.

Lo, the righteous perisheth,
And no man layeth it to heart.
And merciful men are taken away,
None considering that the righteous is taken away from evil.
And he shall enter into peace.

℟. As a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
So he opened not his mouth.
And he shall enter into peace.

Peter. There it was. That music again. Did you hear it?

James. I heard it.

John. It's as if—as if more was happening than we know of here.

Andrew. Sometimes I feel the land knows.

Bartholomew. I feel the stars know.

Thomas. It's only us who don't know.

Peter. What is there to know, save that he's dead and buried, and we've all forsaken and denied him?

John. Maybe he'll come back, as he said.

Peter. As he said! When did he say it?

John. Oh, I dunno. But I've heard him talk more than once of being crucified and rising again.

Thomas. He'll never rise again. You saw him buried, John?

John. I saw him buried. Mr. Joseph, the rich Jew gentleman that lives at Little Park, he offered him a grave in his own garden. They were in a hurry to bury him, seeing as Easter was close at hand, and I don't know what we could have done if Mr. Joseph hadn't offered the grave. So our Shepherd lies in his garden, under a thorn tree.

[*All sit with bowed heads. The voices of the* ANGELS *are heard again.*]

Angel Choir.

℣. I have delivered my beloved
Into the hand of the wicked,
And mine heritage is become unto me as a lion in the wood.
They have made my pleasant place a wilderness,
And being desolate it mourneth after me.

℟. The merciless men have risen up against me
And with terrible eyes piercing me through with a cruel blow,
They gave me vinegar to drink.
They made my pleasant place a wilderness,
And being desolate it mourneth after me.

James. Gone! Gone! He is gone, our Shepherd, like the light.

John. He was like the sun. The earth is cold without him. I reckon we shall have no more flowers this Spring.

Philip. He was a fountain of many waters.

Thomas. Can you remember how we were sometimes afraid?

Bartholomew. And durst not ask him any more questions.

John. Sometimes I felt he came from God, and would go back to God.

Andrew. And yet he came, a man.

John. Aye, but with a deep heart—a secret heart.

Peter. Oh, 'a' done do with all your nonsense. We none of us know who our Shepherd was, nor whence he came, nor whither he has gone. All we know is that he is dead, and lies buried under a thorn-tree.

[*The angel voices are heard.*]

Angel Choir.

℣. I am counted as one of them
That go down into the pit.
I have been even as a man that hath no strength,
Free among the dead.

℟. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit
In a place of darkness,
And in the deep.
I have been even as a man that hath no strength,
Free among the dead.

James. We can't stay around here any more. The place is haunted. I'm going home.

Peter. There's no sense in our setting around mourning together. We'd best be getting back to our jobs. My ship's ready to sail at Rye.

James. And so is our father's ship. We'll go together.

Matthew. Will they take me back at the customs?

Simon. We'd all be better going back to the old ways. We tried the new for a while. . . . Many of us had hoped much from them. . . . I, for one, thought the Shepherd would build our Church anew. But it was not to be. Our earthly hope is ended.

John. Oh, doan't go speaking of the end. There's no end till the end of the Sabbath.

Peter. What's the lad mean?

John. I've words in my head—words that I've been given—" In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week. . . ."

James. That's middling poor words, and no use to us. Come, don't let's go talking of vain things. Let's all be going back to our work, to the things that matter.

All. Aye, to the things that matter.

[*They rise to go.*]

John. Oh, not like this—not without one prayer—or singing of one song together, as we used with our Shepherd.

[*The others exchange glances, they seem uncertain, but finally decide to humour him.*]

Peter. Very well then. Let us sing a song. Which shall it be?

Voices. The Song of Habbakuk——
The Song of Hezekias——
The Song of Zacharias——
The Song of Zacharias!

Peter. Zacharias has it. We'll sing it together. Then put out the lights and go.

[*They stand round the table singing together to the tune,* "O, God of Jacob, by whose hand."]

The Song of Zacharias.

O blessed be the Lord our God,
And prais'd his holy Name,
For when in darkness all men trod,
To visit us he came.

Redemption to his folk he brought
As prophets said of old,
And set a candle in our house
In candlestick of gold.

That we his folk should saved be
From all that hate us so,
And before him in holiness
And righteousness should go.

And thou, O child, shalt now be called
The Son of Love Divine,
For thou shalt go before his face,
And make his paths to shine.

So that the vale is light at last,
The shadows fade and cease,
And our tired feet come thankfully
Into the way of peace.

[*While they sing young* ANDREW *is busy putting out the candles, taking each one down in turn from the mantelpiece and blowing out the flame. When the song ceases the room is almost dark, and the young man's hand is upon the last light. Then the* SHEPHERD'S MOTHER *speaks for the first time.*]

The Mother. Leave one candle burning.

Peter. Aye, leave us something to light us out.

The Mother. It is not to light us out. I will set it in the window, to guide him here. He will be coming soon.

Peter. What does that mean?

James. He'll never come.

John. Mother!

The Mother. Give me the light.

[*She takes the light, and pulls back the curtains, the room is flooded with a sudden gleam, as the dawn pours in, washing out the weak candle-flame in a pure ocean of light.*]

John [*excitedly*]. In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day. . . .

Scene V

Scene: *Garden of Little Park Manor near Battle. It is dark, though pale slats of light are stretched across the sky behind the trees, and the Easter moon is sinking behind the woods of Ashburnham in the west. Under the trees, all is in shadow—even the pale April flowers that grow in rings round their trunks do not gleam. There is as it were a movement in the darkness, a form detaches itself from it, then comes swiftly forward. For a moment the* Shepherd *stands motionless in the shadow and stillness of the April dawn. He speaks in a low voice, with eyes uplifted to the light.*

Shepherd.

I am arisen, and am still with thee, Alleluya,
Thou hast laid thy hand upon me, Alleluya.
Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me, Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya!

[*He moves quickly on again, and disappears among the shadows. For some minutes longer the silence lasts, but the light grows steadily. It spreads in a white fan over the sky, and the shapes of the trees are seen, and the delicate outline of their Spring boughs. The light comes down into the garden, and shows the daffodils and Lent lilies that grow in bloomy rings in the long grass at the foot of the trees, and a green lawn globed with dew, beyond which, on a grassy terrace backed with laurels and flowering shrubs, an altar*

tomb stands, broken and empty. It is one of those stone tombs seen in churches and chantry chapels and in old-fashioned churchyards. But the top and sides are thrown down. Only the two ends stand. By the time the light reaches it a rosy flush has crept into the whiteness. The warm ray touches the dipping moon just as she sinks below the rim of the woods. A bird lifts a sleepy voice among the trees. Another bird sends out a few thin sweet notes into the kindling light. A hare runs out on the lawn and nibbles a blade of grass. Scents begin to stir, as a little breeze shakes the flowers. Two ANGELS *approach from different ends of the terrace and greet each other by the empty tomb.*]

1*st Angel.* The peace of the Lord be always with you.
2*nd Angel.* And with your spirit.

[*They kiss each other. The voices of unseen Angels are heard singing.*]

Angel Choir.

℣. Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya!
This is the day which the Lord hath made:
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
Alleluya!

℟. O give thanks unto the Lord for he is gracious
And his mercy endureth for ever.
Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya!

[*Meanwhile the two* ANGELS *seat themselves one at each end of the tomb.*]

1*st Angel.* It is good to hear the Alleluyas again. How

sad the voices of heaven and earth have been during the last three days!

2nd Angel. The earth nearly died of her sorrow. For three days she lay swooning before God.

1st Angel. She was like a creature in a dream. Her Spring withered upon her.

2nd Angel. But she is waking now. She stirs, she trembles. She too comes out of the grave.

1st Angel. The voice of the Accuser is silenced. No more can he keep her apart from heaven. She is now a bride, whose marriage feast is ready, and whose bridegroom comes forth.

2nd Angel. O let the earth bless the Lord! Yea, let her praise him and magnify him for ever.

1st Angel. They are coming—the women—I see them.

2nd Angel.—I see them too—the women—last at the cross and first at the grave.

[MARY MAGDALENE *and the other* MARY, JOANNA *and* SALOME *come treading slowly across the lawn, their arms sagging with flowers. Their eyes are downcast and their footsteps trail in the dew-drenched grass.*]

Other Mary. Oh, I am tired. These flowers feel heavy —and after all, what good can they do?

Joanna [*prosaically*]. We shall put them on his grave.

Other Mary. And what good will *that* do?

Mary Magdalene. If only we could lay them on his heart. I long to touch his hand again, even though cold and dead, to look into his face. . . .

Salome. You can never do that.

Mary Magdalene. Maybe I can. They buried him

hastily—maybe the grave is still open. . . . Oh! [*She suddenly catches sight of the shattered and empty tomb*]. Oh! They have broken open his grave. They have taken him away. Oh, whatsumever shall we do?

[*The other women look up and see what she sees. They are filled with consternation.*]

Women. The tomb is broken.
They've stolen his body.
Oh, the heartless brutes!
What shall we tell the others?

1*st Angel.* Tell them that it is not good to seek the living among the dead.

Other Mary. What was that? I heard a voice.

Mary Magdalene. There are many voices—our own.

Other Mary. But this was a different voice. Didn't any of you hear it?

[*They shake their heads.*]

Joanna. I didn't hear it, but I thought I saw something.

Others. What?

Joanna. [*trembling*]. An angel. Yes—it's come again. I see it—over there—look! look! [*She points. At first the others cannot see, but suddenly* SALOME *cries out.*]

Salome. Yes, I see it too! I see an angel sitting at the head of the tomb.

Mary Magdalene. I see nothing but the grave—and that's empty.

Other Mary. I see two angels, one at each end—now, they're gone.

Salome. I can see only one. Oh! his face shines.

[*They are all very much afraid.*]

1st Angel. Have no fear. All is well. He is not here —he is risen. Do you not remember what he used to say to you when he was with you on the Marsh, that the Shepherd would be betrayed into the hands of wicked men, and be crucified, and would rise again the third day?

Joanna. Now I seem to remember things he used to say. Don't you remember?—down at Lattenden—how he used sometimes to say that after he was dead he would rise again?

Other Mary. Yes, I seem to remember that now. I remember how queer we all thought it at the time, but maybe it's true.

Salome. That he's risen again.

Mary Magdalene. I don't believe it.

Other Mary. But those were his words. I remember them now.

2nd Angel. Go, tell his companions and Peter that he is risen, and has already gone before you to the Marsh. He is waiting for you to join him there.

Salome. He is risen as he said he would. I feel sure of it now. Let us go and tell the others.

Joanna. Yes, and especially poor Peter, who is so sad because he was afraid at the trial, and told the Mayor's folk he didn't know the Shepherd.

Other Mary. Come, let's hurry back. Then we can all go together to Lattenden. I have a feeling that if we went there we'd find him waiting for us.

Mary Magdalene. [*with a sob*]. I don't believe it.

[*The women go off, still carrying their flowers.* MARY MAGDALENE *follows them sorrowfully, lagging behind. The day is now nearly bright, sunshine*

fills the sky and sprinkles the tree-tops with showery gold, though the trees still fling long shadows upon the lawn, where the dew lies unmelted. The birds are now singing gladly, and the whole garden steams with scent as the flowers open.]

1st Angel. Angel, I am in love with this world which we are visiting. My feet will be sad when they tread it no longer.

2nd Angel. They are all very beautiful and wonderful and sweet, these patterns of the heavenly things. I had no idea before I came that images could be so lovely.

1st Angel. Have you wandered far? Have you seen much of the earth?

2nd Angel. I have seen the sea and the mountains, and I have seen numberless islands in the sea—islands with red cliffs and islands with grey walls, and islands that were lakes of blue water set in rings of coral. I have seen islands where the foot of man has never trod, and yet where nevertheless Summer comes and the sun shines and the air is full of sweetness, and the big lovely flowers open without thought of human eye and the birds sing though no human ear listens to their song. The island spices smoke in the sun like incense for the glory of God alone.

1st Angel. I have never left these shores, but I have seen many wonderful and lovely things. I have seen the multitudes of the redeemed walking and singing together for joy. I was down by the sea at Hastings in the evening yesterday, and I saw the throngs of redeemed men and women and little children walking to and fro together by the shore. I saw them in a mass of drifting colours, purples and blues and greens and pinks, in the gracious

dusk, and I heard their voices as the voices of the sea, and I knew the interpretation of the song that they sang, though the words were but slight words, woven out of their web of earthly thought, for it is the New Song that all creation sings to-day: "Thou art worthy, O Lamb, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."

2nd Angel. Alleluya!

1st Angel. Alleluya!

[*There is a sound of thudding footsteps and the breaking of boughs.*]

2nd Angel. Some one is coming quickly—through the copse.

1st Angel. Can it be Peter?

2nd Angel. It is Peter and John. They must have met the women on their way to the farm.

[PETER *and* JOHN *enter quickly and silently. They run across the lawn at a steady pace, without a glance astray for the beauty of the garden, as men who have only one thought and one goal. The goal is the empty tomb. They run towards it, over the dew, steadily, side by side. As they climb the bank* JOHN, *in his lean-built youth, draws ahead. He runs up to the tomb, then shrinks back, suddenly overwhelmed and afraid.* PETER *has no such recoils; he looks into the tomb, and sees the grave-clothes lying. Then* JOHN *overcomes his timidity and looks in too. For a moment they stand gazing upon each other,*

still dumb, then the same thought seems to strike them both, and they turn from the grave, running swiftly and silently as before, but with awe rather than eagerness upon their faces. As they disappear into the copse the first ANGEL *speaks with a sigh.*]

1st Angel. Here is a thing to which I cannot grow accustomed upon earth, and that is that so many should look upon me without seeing me.

2nd Angel. True. At first I felt that all whom I saw must see me, but now I realize that this is not so.

1st Angel. Their eyes are holden.

2nd Angel. They are fat.

1st Angel. When the kingdom of God shall come men shall see as they are seen and know as they are known. But till then we can only touch their thought, the secret places of their minds which they scarcely know themselves.

2nd Angel. Here comes Mary Magdalene back again. She looks sad. I hope that she will see us.

1st Angel. She will neither see us nor hear us. She is more external than the other woman, since her senses have more power over her soul.

[MARY MAGDALENE *comes in, trailing sadly, withered flowers upon her arm, and tears upon her face.*]

2nd Angel [*full of compassion*]. My dear, why do you cry like this?

1st Angel. Whom are you seeking here?

[MARY *sinks down by the tomb.*]

Mary [*weeping bitterly*]. Oh, where is my Shepherd? They have taken away my Shepherd. I brought him

flowers, to lay upon his heart, but he is gone. They have taken him away, and I do not know where they have hidden him. Oh, where is the Shepherd of Lattenden?

[*The* SHEPHERD *stands by* MARY. *He was scarcely seen to come, but he is there. The* ANGELS *stiffen upon the tomb—they are almost like marble angels as they gaze. But* MARY *does not see him, for her head is bowed in mourning upon her knees.*]

Shepherd. Dear lady, why are you crying so? Whom are you looking for here?

[MARY *lifts her head a little at the voice. She sees his feet and supposes him to be the gardener.*]

Mary. Sir, if you have taken his body away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him and bury him in a spot which I alone know of.

Shepherd. Mary!

[*She jerks up her head. A gasping sigh comes from her.*]

Mary. Shepherd! [*She tries to seize him by the feet. He draws back from her.*]

Shepherd. Do not touch me. This body can no longer be a link between us till I have raised it to my Father's throne. But go to my brothers, my dear friends of the Marsh, and tell them that I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.

[*He is suddenly gone.* MARY *looks round, her eyes bright with joy, then rises joyfully to her feet.*]

Mary. The Shepherd is risen—the good Shepherd is risen. Oh praise God for this day!

[*She gazes round her in ecstasy, and from the sides of the garden, from among the trees, spotted over with the shadows of leaves, dappled with sunlight as they move, come the* ANGELS *of the heavenly choir, invisible no longer, but shining like gold and silver birds in the glory of the morning. They gather round* MARY *as she stands before the empty tomb, and she and they sing together the glad Sequence of Easter Day.*]

Angels.

Christians, to the Shepherd victim
Sing your joyful song to-day.
The Shepherd has redeemed his sheep,
The Shepherd undefiled
Has made the sick earth whole.
She is reconciled
To her Father, her Bridegroom and her son.
Death and life in war stupendous
Battled with their hosts tremendous,
And the king of life who died
Now lives for ever.

Mary, Mary!
Say what you saw in the morning,
What you saw on your way in the morning.

Mary.

I saw the Shepherd's broken prison,
I saw his power new risen.
I saw the angels bright
And the grave-clothes white.

My Shepherd of many waters, lives again,
And at this home among the waters
He waits to meet his own.

Angels.

Our Shepherd from death is risen
As the whole glad earth knows,
And shows,
Rising with him from death to life,
From Winter into Summer.
Oh Shepherd-Victor, pray for all thy sheep,
Thy flock in heaven, thy flock on earth
And thy flock in the hidden fold
Which lies beneath the earth.
Oh King and Conqueror, grant us mercy.
Amen. Alleluya!

Scene VI

Scene: *Lattenden in the Marsh. It is a fair meadow, standing high with buttercups. The hawthorn hedge is already flowering, and burns in a green and white flame against the blue waste of the sky. The reeds stand high in the dykes, upright in the windless air. There is a shimmer of heat over all, a fertile, joyous heat.*

The Shepherd's *companions enter the meadow—first the chosen three—*Peter, James *and* John, *then the others in a loose knot. They are followed by the little group of women—the* Marys, Salome, Joanna *and the* Shepherd's Mother, *walking with arms linked and faces smiling in the sun.*

Peter. Here we all are, and where is the Shepherd?

John. He will come.

Peter. I don't fear that. We have his word that he will meet us here, and if there's one thing that we men know now it is that his word is true.

John. It has all been true—and wonderful.

James. Yes, indeed, young one. When I think of our sorrows and our dreads, and then of what is now . . .

John. Now and ever shall be.

Peter. World without end. Amen.

James. I could sing for joy.

Peter and John. And I——

And I.

Other Companions. And all of us.

Mary Magdalene. When I remember how I saw him in the garden and thought he was the gardener . . .

Peter. When I remember how I met him at the farm —down by the orchard wall . . .

James. And I met him too, at the bottom of Marley Lane.

John. Then there were those two men who came with their tale. Do you remember?—how he had walked with them from Rye to Udimore and then had supper with them at the inn.

Andrew. And there was the time when he suddenly appeared and said " Peace be with you all," and we were so scared we couldn't answer.

Bartholomew. That was on the first Sunday.

Philip. No, it was last Sunday.

Bartholomew. He came twice, because of Thomas. Don't you remember?

Thomas. Yes, he showed me his wounds. I wouldn't believe unless I saw those wounds. I said to myself, " If it's truly our Shepherd, he must be wounded. No one could have been hurt as he was, and not show it afterwards."

Peter. Well, you saw the wounds.

James. And put your finger in them.

Peter. And he said " be not faithless but believing."

Thomas. Yes, I know. Maybe I shouldn't ought to have doubted, but reckon my doubts gave good proof to you men. We'll always know our Shepherd now by his wounds.

Mary Magdalene. Oh, his white, burning body! It is like a candle alight.

John. Hark! I hear music.

[*There is the sound of music in the distance, drums and piping. It comes nearer, playing a jigging folk-tune. A crowd of country folk enter with the* SHEPHERD *in their midst. He walks erect and triumphant, his head crowned with the garlands his people have made out of the young primroses. He carries his crook, which is tufted with violets, primroses and anemones—young anemones are pinned on his smock. Round him dance men, women and children, crowned with spring flowers—buttercups, cuckoo-flowers, wind-flowers, bluebells, stitchwort, speedwell, primroses, violets, hawthorn, from the fields and hedges—daffodils, jonquils, Lent lilies, tulips, crocuses and hyacinths from the cottage gardens. The drums and pipes play merry, lilting folk-music, as the people dance round the* SHEPHERD. *There is an echo in the music of the Furry Dance, of the Whistling Song, of Roughty Toughty, of the Hobby Horse Measure and the Morris Dance—every merry tune played or sung by simple merry folk seems to find its echo in the music that jigs round the* SHEPHERD *as his people dance about him.*]

Peter and the other Companions. Oh, Shepherd! Shepherd! Shepherd of Lattenden!

[*The music ceases.*]

Peter. Well met, friends and neighbours all. The earth is full of goodness. Let's rejoice together, and be thankful.

All. Alleluya! Alleluya!

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Peter [*exalted*]. Yes, let's sing psalms together, world without end, and dance our merry dances together, world without end. For the Shepherd of the Marsh has risen, and walks no more in the grave. Alleluya! Hurrah!

[*The* SHEPHERD *looks long at* PETER.]

Shepherd. Peter, do you love your Shepherd?

Peter [*surprised*]. Of course I do.

Shepherd. Feed my lambs.

Peter. I am a fisherman by trade, and now I shall have to be thinking of getting back to sea; in all these late times I have neglected my ship a little. The spring tides are here, and I shall put to sea again.

Shepherd. Peter, do you love your Shepherd?

Peter. Shepherd, surely you know that.

Shepherd. Feed my sheep.

Peter. I am not a landfarer. I belong to the sea. My father has his boat at the Rother's mouth, and my brother and I have our boat.

Shepherd. Peter, do you love your Shepherd?

Peter. Why have you asked me that three times? You know everything, so you must know that I love you.

Shepherd. Feed my sheep.

[PETER *looks vexed and bewildered, so the* SHEPHERD *continues.*]

Shepherd. Till now, Peter, you have been young and your way has been your own way, the way of the sea.

But when you are no longer young your way shall be no longer your own way, but my way, even the way I trod to save my sheep.

[*As his voice ceases the sound of singing is heard, and the* ANGEL CHOIR *enters, walking sweetly and slowly through the meadow and singing in the sun.*]

Angels.

The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord,
Alleluya !
By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.
Alleluya ! Alleluya !
The Good Shepherd is risen,
Who laid down his life for the sheep.
Alleluya !

[*An Angel prays.*]

Angel. Almighty God, Who hast given us Thine only beloved Son, to be to us both a sacrifice for sin and also an example of godly life : give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life.

Peter. A prayer-meeting ! A prayer-meeting ! Such as we've so often had together. Good folk all, this is good indeed. I pray you listen while I say the words the Lord has given me. [*He comes forward and stands beside the* SHEPHERD, *in front of the crowd of country folk with their flowers, behind which again stand the* ANGELS, *against a background of hawthorn hedge and sky. He speaks slowly and carefully as one reciting a message.*] Dearly beloved :

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this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience' sake endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree: that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

All. Alleluya, Alleluya!
I am the Good Shepherd;
I know my sheep, and am known of mine,
Alleluya.

Shepherd [*standing in the midst and singing in the tone of the Gospel*]. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep have I, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.

All. Thanks be to God.

[*Then the music breaks out again, pipe and drum and voices, folk-tunes and alleluyas all in one, angels and mortals singing together, finally all joining in "* SHEPHERD'S HEY *and* ALLELUYA *" to the tune of " Filii et Filiæ."*

All [*singing*].
Alleluya, alleluya, alleluya!
Come, friends and neighbours, let us sing
On this most joyful day of Spring
Our Shepherd's triumph and home-coming.
Alleluya!

At Easter dawn before the light
Had stolen the meadows from the night,
Our women saw a valiant sight.
Alleluya!

They saw two white angelic men
Who said, " Why seek your Shepherd when
He has gone home to Lattenden?
Alleluya!

" The marshes of the world beneath,
The rivers of the land of death
Drowned not your Shepherd's living breath.
Alleluya!

" The marshes of the world above,
The rivers of the land of love
Wait for your Shepherd's last high move,
Alleluya! "

And now he walks the world of men,
So let us all be merry, then,
And dance and sing through Lattenden,
Alleluya !

For when at last he leaves our earth,
It still shall be with sounds of mirth
And songs of springtime and new birth,
Alleluya !

He goes a pasture to prepare
In heavenly fields, by waters rare,
And we, his flock, shall find him there,
Alleluya !

So, friends and neighbours, all be gay,
And with the angels on this day
Dance joyfully the Shepherd's Hey,
Alleluya !
Alleluya, alleluya, alleluya ! Amen.

THE END

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